A History of AMERICAN literature



Questions & Answers

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A HISTORY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

[Complete in on Volume]

From Earliest Times to Present Day.

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CONTENTS

A HISTORY
OF
AMERICAN LITERATURE

Q. 1. Do you agree with the view that a study of American Literature should begin only with the eighteenth century ?

Ans. The history of America started with the Settlement of Jamestown in 1607. Since the literature of a country is intimately connected with its history, we have to go right back to the earliest times for an understanding of American literature. True be belles-lettres or literature of a purely aesthetic sense came to be written in America only by about the close of the 18th century. But if recording of human experiences can be termed literature what the early colonists wrote must be deemed an integral part of American Literature.

It is urged that the early writers were all Englishmen and hence what they wrote cannot be included in American writings. But as M. C. Tyler says, "Notwithstanding their English birth, these first writers in America were Americans. We may not exclude them from our history of American literature. They founded that literature, they are its Fathers, they stamped their spiritual lineaments upon it, and we shall never deeply enter into the meanings of American Literature in its later forms without tracing it back affectionately to its beginning with them."

It must also be remembered that though Captain John Smith, William Bradford and Mrs. Bradstreet, Edward Taylor all came from England. They wrote in an altogether new setting, and what they wrote naturally was influenced by their environment. America has lent its colour and stamp upon their works and hence they belong legitimately to American literature though England can claim it as her own by right of nationality.

Engrossed as they were in the mighty task of building a commonwealth free from tyrannical rule of kings, these hardy pioneers did not care much for writing belles-lettre. But the accounts of travel, the descriptions of the land, and faithful

reports of colonial life, throb with their pride in what they were doing. They reflect th. ir aspirations and hopes, the trials and the set-backs of those who were fighting against the wilderness. It is in these writings of the first stage in American literary history that we find how, as James Russel Howell puts it, the nation grew :

Strong thro' shifts, an' wants an' pains,
Nursed by stern men with empires in their brains.

Colonial American literature depicts the dangerous adventure, the hard work and difficult decisions that went into the process of building a nation.

Moreover in the pages of these early books we discover something important—the basic ingredients that make up the American character. The American spirit is made up largely of courage, industry and optimism, characteristics that inspite men and women with confidence in attacking any problem that may arise. The hardships of living conditions, Indian attacks, sickness and starvation are from the beginning reflected in the pages of Smith, Bradford and Winthrop. That despite innumerable dangers, the colonists flourished is a tribute to their courage and tenacity. Their writings, therefore, form an important saga in American history. The effect of puritanism lingered long after the puritan movement expired in the 18th century. It impregnated the new enthusiastic religions which arose in that century and continued as a living force in the 19th and 20th centuries. The Northern abolitionists showed all the characteristics of puritanism, which have still been in evidence in the crusades for temperance, reform and world peace in our own time. "Hence it is only sensible that a student of American literary thought should trace it from the very beginning." "Our colonial literature became a great reservoir of material and inspiration for that of the 19th century, for readers today it still provides an understanding of those bedrock American experiences which developed the national character and our peculiarly American institutions.

Moreover American thought and conduct today reflect points of view and patterns of reasoning which antedate the Revolution. No living American whatever his descent has wholly escaped the literature of the May Flower compact, Poor Richard Almanac and the Declaration of Independence. To trace the roots of American literary tradition, we have to go right back to the colonial period.

Q. 2. Account for the dearth of literary output in America during the colonial period.

Ans. What is termed colonial period in American history extends from 1607 to 1765. During these years the literary output in America was scanty. That a group of people who had their cultural lien in Europe should have given so little thought to literary composition seems rather strange till we look into the factors that conditioned life in these early American Settlements.

To the pioneer settlers, survival was the first and most vital problem. To fight against the wilderness, to convert a rugged forest into cultivable land, to hold out against adverse forces, elemental and otherwise were some of their gripping problems which shut out from their minds thoughts of literary composition. Lack of leisure, therefore, chiefly accounts for the lack of a literature of a high order.

Moreover as sharers of the cultural tradition of England, the colonists did not feel the urge to create a literature of their own that could vie with that of England and of Europe. They felt that they still belonged culturally to the old world and could still receive sustenance from their parent country. It was only much later, after the winning of political independence that America felt the need for weaning herself culturally from England.

Great literature is often the result of a sense of oneness, of a spirit of nationality which the heterogeneous settlers of America were yet to feel. Mrs. Stowe has said, "The literature of a people must spring from the sense of its Nationality." This sense of nationality was not felt by the colonists who still thought of themselves as part of England or of Europe. The fusion in the "melting pot" that Creveceour describes took place later and this is seen unmistakably in the very fibre of American literature of the Revolutionary period.

If the bustle and activity of the colonial period gave little time for the writer to write, it is equally true that it gave the public little leisure to read. No writer can thrive in an indifferent medium. Literary compositions of merit are made possible by the response and encouragement from the reading public. In colonial America, the reading of the people was confined to the Bible and the prayer book and the few books that were brought from England. Facilities for printing were negligible and there was scant inducement for the early American to write. Whenever he wrote he did so for the sake of the Englishmen and his writings

were to be published in England. Only three things prompted the colonial writer to take up his pen. One was the desire to record important events and to provide their families and friends with an account of personal experiences. Much of the writings of Bradford and John Smith are the result of this. Second was the motive of propaganda. Glowing accounts of the land were written so that the English people might be lured in larger numbers to America, this land of milk and honey.

"Heaven and earth never agreed better to frame a place for man's habitation" wrote John Smith, founder of Virginia. William Penn wrote "the air is sweet and clear, the heavens serene." The spaciousness and the grandeur of this new continent, the richness of its natural resources, the promise it held for the future are all mirrored in the writings of this period. John Smith's writings give evidence to another important thing. It is the Voyager's obsession, a Renaissance obsession to make the new world a part of the old.

The third factor behind the colonial urge to write was the puritan's inordinate appetite for religious writings. Sharing Milton's desire to 'justify the ways of God to man', these writers produced a voluminous literature composed of sermons, diaries and biographies and poems of a religious nature. But the puritan's subordination of form to matter hindered the production of a literature of purely aesthetic nature.

Thus in the heap of colonial writings, we look in vain for a scrap of writing that may be called belles-lettre. It was by the end of the colonial period the broader religious outlook, the sway of rationalism, and the dawn of nationalism soon created in America an atmosphere conducive to the production of genuine literature that could be compared with that of England.

Q. 3. What were the different types of literature produced in America during the colonial period ?

Ans. The mass of colonial writing may be divided under several heads. The first was literature of exploration and adventure.

Colonisation offered excellent opportunity for literature of this type to come up. Since exploration was a phase of the Renaissance, the first Southern authors where Elizabethan in energy, curiosity and versatility. They were adventures, describing in animated and colourful language their disasters the

fascinating beauty of the strange land and the way of the Indians. It is here that we have the beginnings of a very popular type of literature, namely travel literature, which in the hands of Mark Twain and others became a very rich source of entertainment.

In this category came John Smith's description of New England and Map of Virginia. Francis Higginson's 'New England Plantation' and Mortan's 'New England Canaan' are also significant. They served the purpose of propaganda, but they are interesting because of their descriptions of American scenes, life and experiences. The style of these was varied, but mostly the writers relied on the style of 'Eupheus.'

'Histories and Narratives of Settlements' formed the second important literary type of this period. Most important of these was William Bradford's 'Of Plimmoth Plantation.' Others worth mentioning are Edward Johnson's 'Wonder-Working Providence of Sion's Saviour in England,' William Hubbard's 'Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians.' These works are interesting because they are written to embody Puritan's view of history as the tangible record of God's plan and a manifestation of His Power. The great book of this type was Cotton Mather's monumental work "Magnalia Christi Americana", published in 1702. It describes the 'Golden age of Puritanism before its decline.'

Sermons were the most important and by far the most voluminous of all types of literature produced during the colonial period. The puritan way of life and the assumption that literature should concern itself primarily with spiritual values, caused the sermon to be the most highly developed and the most popular of all literary forms. From Thomas Shepard to Jonathan Edwards, we have a number of Theologians well-versed in the art of pulpit oratory. Unlike the Eupheuistic style of the histories and travel accounts, the sermons were written in a plain style, and served as a corrective to the elaborate and fanciful style. The best specimens of this type are remarkable for their tight logical structure, for the precision of the thought expressed and for the excellent representation of Puritan doctrine.

Theological and Polemical writing claimed a prominent place in the literary production of this period. The Mathers made a tremendous contribution to this type of writing. Richard Mather's *Church Government and Church Covenant* (1643), John Cotton's *The Way of the Churches of Christ in N. England* (1654)

and Thomas Hooker's *A Survey of the Theory of Church Discipline* expounds the prevalent Theological doctrines. Challenging the autocratic sway of these doctrines, was Roger Williams who wrote *Bloody Tenet of Prosecution* (1644). The daring tone of dissent led to the expulsion of Williams from the Massachussets Bay Colony. Nathaniel Ward's work *The Simple Cobbler of Agawam*, on the other hand, lamented the tolerance shown towards heretics in the Bay Colony. He satirised the liberal tendencies in religion.

The greatest among the Theologians of the period were Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards. Cotton Mather was among the enlightened personalities of the age and had a scientific spirit. Yet he was not free from the prejudices of the age, as is seen from his views on witchcraft. Cotton Mather had great humanitarian interests, apart form his keen interest in mathematical and natural sciences. Mather's Essays to do Good were powerful enough to inspire Benjamin Franklin.

Jonathan Edwards exercised a more lasting influence on American religious thoughts than Cotton Mather. He was something of a mystic and in his rejection of a Hebraic God in favour of a Universal being, he anticipates the Transcendentalists. Edward with his absorption in the phenomena of conversion was responsible for a wave of religious awakening that spread throughout the country. *A Divine and Supernatural Light* (1734) carefully argues out his conviction that a mystical faith is quite logical. *A Faithful Narrative* describes the first great revival in his Chûrch. Another important work is *Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New England*. A number of treatises poured out from the pen of Edwards and these deal with the much debated issues of Original Sin, Freedom of the Will and so on. Though several points in his Theological expositions have been challenged, his deep awareness of the spiritual significance of nature, his belief in a benevolent deity and his deep sincerity and mystical experience have all rendered him one of the most important writers and thinkers of America.

Yet another literary form which achieved prominence among the puritans was the diary, or the autobiography. An amazing number of colonists kept diaries or wrote autobiographies. This is not surprising when we bear in mind the puritan's conviction that all religious progress centres on the individual. Every puritan, therefore, was prompted to make records of his spiritual development. Some of these diaries reveal a very strenuous self-introspection and a critical, ceaseless self-analysis. Hence we have a

systematic account of day-to-day events, temptations, struggles and reflections. Some of these diaries were obviously meant by the writers to be passed on to others, as they afforded excellent material for edification. These however are not the diariers that posterity have wanted to look into. They are the ones where spiritual matters are flavoured with temporal affairs. Winthrop's journal, Samuel Sewall's diary, the travel journal of Mrs. Sarah Kemble Knight are among the treasured diaries of this period. They give us invaluable insight into the customs, manners and personalities of the people of this period. Temporal concerns like food and drink, social life, births, marriages, deaths find their way into these day-to-day records which recreate for the modern reader a vivid picture of 17th and 18th century American Life. Among these Sewall's diary is easily the best. This man with his eye for the trivial and the ridiculous affords us something that Puritan literature en bloc lacks, namely the refreshing quality of humour. It is from his diary that we get the best and most intimate picture of life in American colonies. Published hundred and fifty years after his death it covers the time from 1674—1729 except the years between 1677—1685.

Sewall has been compared to the great English diarist of the 17th century Samuel Pepys. Like Pepys Sewall too reveals himself as a human being, fraught with human frailties. His diary presents an amusing combination of religion and practicality typified by Sewall's bringing the authority of the scripture to bear on wigs, on meditating on God's grace, while feeding his chickens. Certain very amusing passages in the diary deal with Sewall's courting of Madam Winthrop. Spiritual autobiographies were allied to the diaries and remained a very popular type of reading. Jonathan Edward's *Personal Narratives* was the best of the species. Benjamin Franklin's 'autobiography' and John Woolman's 'Journals' are two great literary works to be written in this tradition.

This literature, we find, was the handmaid to religion during this period. As religious controversies swayed the minds of the people, prose got predominance over poetry though poetry was not by any chance neglected. The most important poets of the period were Anne Bradstreet, Michael Wigglesworth, and Edward Taylor. These puritan poets wielded poetry to exalt and glorify the Almighty. Hence they are of a deeply religious and spiritual nature. Secularisation of poetry came only in the late 18th and the early 19th centuries.

Q. 4. Who were the poets of the Colonial Period ? Do you find genuine poetic inspiration in their works ?

Ans. The most important concern of the settlers in America was colonising. Yet in the midst of their strenuous life they did find time for the production of poetry. But colonial poetry compared to the poetic output in England was small in quantity and inferior in quality. In fact several critics are of opinion that American poetry before 1765 was negligible.

Poetry, in the colonial period was the result of religious fervour. *The Bay Psalm Book* composed by Thomas Weld, John Eliot and Richard Mather, was one of the earliest poetic works written in America and certainly the first book to come off the American Press. It is written in ballad metre in order to aid the memory in retaining Biblical verses. Its poetic quality, however, is not worth much.

In Ann Bradstreet (1612-1773) we have the first puritan poet. She emigrated to America as a young woman of eighteen and kept her sensitive mind open to the sights and impressions around her in a new land of infinite variety. She had an excellent education for her age and her poetry shows her knowledge of such English poets as Sidney, Spenser, Herbert, Quarles and also of Sylvester's translation of Du Bartas. The themes which she has made use of in her verse are her own feelings and experiences. The fact that amid her manifold work as the wife of an important official and the mother of eight children, she found time to write poetry is evidence enough of the genuineness of her poetic inspiration. By 1650 she has won sufficient fame in the colonies as a poetess so that her brother-in-law arranged the publication of her poems under the pretentious title *The Tenth Muse Lately Spring up in America.* It consisted of poems on 'The Four Seasons' 'The Four Elements', 'The Four Constitutions', and 'Four Monarchies'. These poems written in tedious heroic couplets show an amazing erudition. In 'The Four Monarchies' may be traced the influence of the Bible, Plutarch, Usher and Walter Raleigh's *History of the World*. The poem 'Contemplations' written in the seven line with an Alexandrine shows the influence of Spenser. In this poem Ann Bradstreet has shown a keen eye for the beauties of Nature, though these but go to prove the greater glory of the creator. The glory of this Sun makes her exclaim :

How full of glory then must their creator be
Who gave this bright light lustre unto the:
Admired, adored forever be that Majesty :

She then bewails her own inability to sing and glorify God. The poem concludes with a bold assertion of and an ardern faith in man's immortality. Her shorter poems are more charming, though their again the religious element is important. 'Weary Pilgrim' has as its theme the idea that here is "no abiding city, no permanent stay" for man—"A pilgrim I on earth" says the poetess. 'Flesh and the Spirit' is an expression of the Puritan concept of the hostility between the spirit and the flesh. The poetess agrees with the spirit in saying :

If I of heaven may have my fill
Take thou the world and all that will.

'To My Dear and Loving Husband' is an exquisite and tender love poem. But the expression of love is very much in the traditional manner and lacks originality. It is different from Elizabethan love poem because of the hope implied in it, that their mutual love so satisfying here on earth may continue in the world beyond the grave :

Then while we live in love let's so persevere
That when we live no more we may live ever.

'Upon the Burning of our House' expresses a sense of deep loss though there is the fortifying thought that her treasures are in heaven. 'Longing for Heaven' is also a poem where simplicity and grace are found side by side with genuine and deep emotion. Her spirited resentment of the general opinion that women are incapable beings, finds expression in the poem : 'In Honor of Queen Elizabeth'. Altogether in Ann Bradstreet we discern genuine poetic talent, which one wishes had better scope for improvement.

The next poet of the colonial period was Michael Wigglesworth (1631-1705). He was a minister, who studied medicine with the lofty aim of being more useful to his flock. That this kind, gentle minister should have written one of the most terrifying poems is an indication of the nature of the influence religion exerted upon the minds of the people of this time. 'The Day of Doom' is the most famous poem of Wigglesworth and is a frightening account of the final reckoning when Christ comes and sits in judgment over the world. It is an expression in verse form of the Calvinistic conception of the rewards of the righteous and

the punishment of the sinful persons. To the modern readers with their broader outlook on religion the poem seems severely harsh and ridiculous but in Wigglesworth's day the poem enjoyed great popularity both for its theme and its rhyme scheme. However there are certain portions of the poem with dignity and flashes of vitality and imagination.

Another poem entitled 'God's Controversy with New England' pictures the passing of New England Canaan through prosperity, decline, threat of punishment and the actual chastisement.

Another poet of the Colonial period who deserves mention was Thomas Godfrey. He has the distinction of being the author of the first American play by a native playwright to be produced on the professional stage. The play was 'The Prince of Parthia', written in 1759 but first acted around 1767. This play rests heavily on Elizabethan poetic drama, both in its employment of blank verse and its use of passion and violence on the stage. Godfrey's poems were published in two volumes, 'The Court of Fancy' (1762) and 'Juvenile Poems on Various Subjects.' Godfrey is remarkable for his belief in literature as an end in itself. To him it was not just a means for theological arguments or for edification. Hence his poems mark the beginning of artistic literature in America.

By far the most important poet of the colonial period was Edward Taylor (1645-1729). He was also the most gifted of them all. He was a pastor and a physician who did not think of himself primarily as a poet. Hence his request to leave his poems unpublished. It was in 1937 that a copious output of Taylor's poetry was discovered in Yale Library. It is clear that very few of his contemporaries must have read them.

Taylor was belatedly metaphysical. He was obviously influenced by Donne, Crashaw and Herbert. He has made use of the method of metaphysical poets which T. S. Eliot defined as "The elaboration of a figure of speech to the farthest stage to which ingenuity can carry it." But Taylor has wisely clothed his ideas in homely metaphors drawn from the poet's own experience and not in far-fetched ones. In 'Huswifery' a single metaphor namely that of weaving, is elaborated to the final stage of the manufacturing of the 'Holy Robes for Glory'.

'The Glory of and Grace in the Church set out' speaks of the flowers in the Christian Church which are nurtured by Christ.

In 'The Experience' Taylor speaks in intensely rapturous tones of his right to the seat in Heaven next to God's throne. It also works out the imagery of the lyre—the poet's heart—turned to the praise of God.

'Meditation Eight' considered to be the best poem of Taylor, speaks of Christ as the bread of life. 'In Meditation Sixty' may be thought a companion piece to this one. There the theme is the 'Water of life.'

Taylor's poems ring with his sincerity and joy in Christian living. The latter quality is of great significance as it shatters the illusion that a Puritan's life was "one that was drab and sorrow-laden. Taylor describes in ardent verses the joy and song of Christian living.

A close study of the early American poetry is important as it takes us to the most important concerns of the builders of the nation. Religion to them was something vital and real and it is to the Puritan's religious zeal that we owe some of the fine poems of this period. The metaphysical conceits and artificiality of expression are the result of the colonial poets being too imitative of the metaphysical poets of England. There is, we find, a great deal of sincerity in the poems of Ann Bradstreet and those of Edward Taylor.

Q. 5. Trace the effects of Puritanism on early American literature.

Ans. Puritanism started in England in the 16th Century as a definite religious movement that sought to purify the English Church from the lingering traces of Catholicism. However, soon it got involved in politics and the puritans sought to establish a republic or commonwealth. Their open dissent in religious matters was frowned upon by the Anglican leaders who made efforts to keep the status quo. As early as 1604 James I said of the Puritans : "I shall make them conform themselves or I will harry them out of the land." Charles I and William Laud Bishop of London from 1628-1633 started a policy of persecution of the clergymen who failed to conform and follow the prescribed forms of worship. The leaders of the New England colony were these clergymen who realised that reform of the English Church was impossible. Their one dominant motive was to establish in the colonies a Church government and a way of living in conformation with their cherished beliefs. Six English colonies Plymouth, Massachusets Bay, Maryland, Rhode Island, New

Haven and Pensylvania were founded by religious groups whose economic consideratibns were secondary. Naturally the important writings of this period were expression of their religious zeal.

All the important types of colonial writings bear the stamp of puritanism. The bulk of the prose of this period consisted of sermons, theological writings, autobiographies, biographies and diaries penned by puritans with literary flair. In fact the puritans could conceive of no better purpose for literature than the glorification of God. Literature became in their hands a handmaid to theology. Even poetry was not free to soar into realms of imagination. The poems of Ann Bradstreet reflect the puritan's tenets, the transient nature of this life, the need for subordinating the body to the spirit and so on. The 'Day of Doom' by Michael Wigglesworth is a long and crude version of the Calvinistic doctrine meant to terrify the wicked.

The chief concern of the puritan being the saving of souls, it was unthinkable that these early American writers should give much thought to the composition of imaginative literature. Fiction to them was equivalent tolies and was not to be penned. This feeling was so deep-rooted that it lingered even to the time of Benjamin Franklin who insisted that literature should not only please but also benefit the reader by improving his virtue or his knowledge. Jefferson too was inclined to frown upon fiction.

One should not however declare the puritan influence as something stifling to culture and to literature. It was only the extreme zealots among the puritans who despised this mortal life and indulged in hysterical fanaticism and superstitious burning of witches. The puritans in general were not opposed to culture or refinement. There clergy were well-educated scholars in whom the Renaissance lamp of humanism still burned. They were the earliest colonists to insist on common schools. They had the first College (Harvard in 1636) and the first printing press in the colonies. And these were the men who were responsible for the most abundant and memorable literature created in the colonies before 1740. As Professor Hudson Long states in his introduction to *The American Tradition in Literature* "in their (Puritans') influence on American life, there is much more to bless them for than to condemn."

The puritan's subordination of form to matter was not entirely blameworthy either. It saved the prose style of the period from the artificiality of the Eupheuistic style found in travel

literature and histories. The clarity of thought and lucidity and directness of expression that characterise the sermons and writings of Jonathan Edwards and other theologians and preachers were actually a boon to American prose.

It would be a mistake to assume that puritan influence died out from American literature with the end of the colonial period. It is ture that New England felt the impact of a new civilization at the end of this period and that with the death of Jonathan Edwards the light of the old Churches went out : "but the puritan, standing for the "lit lamp" and "the loins girt" has left on our literature, the impress of his strong moral sense, of his emphasis on the drama of the inner life and of his conviction that spiritual beauties are infinitely the greatest."

Q. 6. Evaluate the contribution made by the Mather dynasty to Colonial American literature.

Ans. A considerable slice of the bulk of Puritan writing came from the pen of the members of the Mather family. The Mathers were a distinguished family which dominated ecclesiastical and political life in the Massachsets Bay colony. They were typical representatives of the enlightened puritans. In their writings we see mirrored the religious ardour of the puritans and also the trend of contemporary thought.

At the head of the family is Richard Mather (1596-1669) a prominent theologian and pastor at Dorchester. He wrote theological treatise like 'Church-Government and Church-Covenant Discussed' and 'A Platform of Church Discipline'. He was also one of those who edited 'The Bay Psalm Book.' This work was an attempt to render the whole of the Book of Psalms into verse that is easy to remember. Though Richard Mather was prominent in the life of the colony he produced relatively little literature.

More important than Richard Mather was his son Increase Mather (1639-1723) who was for some time President of Harvard. Increase Mather was a man of prodigious learning and industry. He had to his credit one hundred and fifty publications written in a lucid, and direct style. As a writer he showed the same efficiency that he displayed as an administrator. Among his writings may be mentioned 'An Essay for the Recording of Illustri ous Providences,' 'Cases of Conscience Concerning Evil Spirits' and 'Several Reasons Proving that Inoculating or Transplanting the Small Pox is a Lawful Practice.' These papers reveal a keen and

alert intellect and a mind that was open to the issues of the time. Increase Mather, we find, had greater breadth of mind than his contemporaries and believed in greater tolerance than the zealots around him. In 'Cases of Conscience Concerning Evil Spirits' he claims that two witnesses are necessary to establish the guilt of a witch. More interesting than these papers is the diary of Increase Mather. Obviously not meant for publication, it was not given to the world till 1900. It is a very rich source of information concerning the life in the colonies. The Puritan culture is revealed in frank and vivid terms by this diary of Increase Mather whom his biographer Professor Murdock calls "the Foremost American Puritan."

From the literary point of view the most important member of the dynasty was Cotton Mather (1663-1728) the son of Increase Mather. His writings impress us both by their quality and their quantity. His literary output was profuse. That he was an indefatigable worker may be learnt from the five hundred books and pamphlets that he wrote. Cotton Mather's books are mainly on theology and history. They reveal his scholarship and also bear testimony to his scientific bent, and curiosity. He advocated the use of inoculation for small pox. In his attitude towards witchcraft also he was different from his contemporaries. His experiment with the possessed girl whom he took into his house is an ample proof of his scientific curiosity. He was studying the case for proof of the curative properties of fasting and prayer in the treatment of witches. Yet Cotton Mather could not altogether escape from the prejudices and superstitions of his age. Like his contemporaries he accepted evidence of the existence of a world of spirits.

Cotton Mather's Magnus Opum is his 'Magnalia Christi Americana' or 'The Ecclesiastical History of New England.' This was written after the Salem Witchcraft trial, the public protest tended to weaken the power of the clergy. Mather felt it his duty to step in with a timely warning against too much liberalism in the Church. He traces the history of New England, revealing the special goodness of God, when the people had kept to strict observance of religion and morality. The work urges the people to give up all thought of protesting against religious orthodoxy.

The deep humanitarianism of Cotton Mather is best found in his 'Bonifacius' or 'Essay to Do Good.' This work is not a mere collection of pious utterances, but the beliefs and convictions of a man who was interested in doing good and humanitarian

work. He founded numerous organisations for social betterment from education of Neg o slaves to mission for the Indians. The 'Do Good Essays' had so powerful an appeal that Benjamin Franklin avowed the profound influence they had upon him.

'Manuductio Ad Ministerium' is a hand book for preachers. In his Cotton Mather gives mature advice to prospective candidates for the ministry. The work is important in yet another way, for a chapter in this on 'Po:try and Style' may be called the best literary criticism of the colonial period. It is here that Mather says : "Since every man will have his own style, I would pray, that we may learn to treat one another with mutual *civilities*, and condescensions and handsomely indulge one another in this, as gentlemen do in other matters". His comments on style are meant chiefly to defend his own method. His own style is quaint and fantastic. It was more like the elaborate and ornate Elizabethan prose style than like the "plain style" of Mather's predecessors, the Puritan divines. It was also unlike the style of Addison and Steele which had set the fashion for the age. With its comments on literature and its pleasant hints to prospective clergymen. 'Manuductio ad Ministerium' certainly deserves Moses C. Tyler's verdict that it is "the most vigorous and entertaining of Mather's books."

'In the Christian Philosopher' Cotton Mather shows himself as having ideas on religion far broad than those of his time. He tries to reconcile science and religion and to establish that Nature bears ample proof of God's infinite benevolence sufficient to appeal to man's reason.

Like all prominent and sincere Puritans Cotton Mather also kept a diary. It is a chronicle of his spiritual state and lacks the humour and wordliness of Sewall's diary. Though this diary does not give much importance to the portrayal of external events, it is one of the fullest and most revealing of Puritan diaries. As in the other works, Mather makes use of a style that is pedantic and antiquated.

With all the limitations the writings of Cotton Mather are far too great to be ignored. They are of diverse forms—sermons, biographies, theological treatises, essays, handbooks for parishoners, letters, poems, and diary. Without his contribution the Puritan literature would have been definitely poorer and our understanding of these early times in American literary history would have been meagre.

Q. 7. How do you account for the signs of development and maturity manifest in American literature during eighteenth century ?

Ans. American literature underwent great changes for the better by the 18th century. The social and political conditions had by now assumed a transformation and were highly conducive to the making of an aesthetic literature, free from the shackles of theology, religion and utilitarian motives.

In the first place, the strain of colonising was over, and most of the colonies had reached a provincial status. The various colonies now kept good contact with one another. Travel and communication had improved. The postal system appeared as a great boon to the people. There appeared in America at this stage the first signs of journalism. America's first Newspaper *The Boston News* was issued in 1704 and soon a number of periodicals sprang up. No doubt these journals were subjected to great censorship ; but the trial for libel of the New York Printer Peter Zenger was a great triumph for journalism. The many magazines and weeklies of this period, though poor and imitative in nature gave ample proof of the fact that the people were taking an interest in cultural and literary affairs instead of being engrossed in material needs. An important factor responsible for the change was the number of literate people. The early settlers had with great wisdom and foresight made provisions for education. Public schools and Church Schools, private academies and home instruction saw to it that the people had a certain level of education. For young men who wanted higher education, facilities were abundant in Harvard or Yale. Between 1740 and 1770 six new colleges arose in the Northern Provinces.

Economically also things were brightening up. Most colonial families were now prosperous and self-supporting. They raised their own food and made their own clothing and even shoes. The provinces in general became more and more rich inspite of restrictions on trade. Fisheries and whaling and ship-building were the major industries that brought plenteous wealth to America. Agriculture kept pace with industrial development. Land was acquired with ease and the soil was so fertile that any man who wanted could reap a rich harvest. Farming in America offered prospects which the European could not have dreamt of. Altogether life on the colonies seemed to be one of bliss as is evident from Crevecoeur's 'Letters of an American Farmer.' All these

things had their impact on literature. Leisure and improved standards of living were highly conducive to the production of a better literature than the 17th century America had yielded.

American character had also assumed changes by now. The settler and planter who was living a feudal life on his great plantations was affected by the spreading revolutionary waves which brought into prominence, qualities like personal honour, chivalrous respect for womanhood, fondness for general entertainment. New classes like the gentlemen, statesmen and soldiers were now created. The south with its pleasure-loving nature experimented with a literary form so far undreamt of in America, namely the drama. Very slight and feeble attempts at drama were made at Charleston as early as 1703 and about 1716 at Williamsburg, Virginia. In this place a dramatic troupe from London under the name of the American Company stayed alive till 1800. In 1767 it presented the first native tragedy to be publicly performed —'The Prince of Parthia' by Thomas Godfrey.

In the 18th century America, religion was becoming broader. Religious toleration was great and material comforts made the thoughts of the people turn to politics and business. The brooding pre-occupation with religion was gone and the laxness in religious matters seemed to alarm such writers as Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards. William Byrd in one of his writings even dared to have a few jokes at the expense of the Chaplain who accompanied his expedition. The very conceptions of God, man and universe were undergoing changes. The liberal tendencies gradually gaining momentum culminated in the bold assertions of Jefferson. Thomas Paine and Philip Freneau. Like Europe, America was under the sway of Reason.

America was now becoming conscious of the new literary trends in England and trying to keep pace with them. Though there was what man be called 'a culture lag' of about 30 years between the first appearance of a literary form in England and its adoption in America, it was most encouraging that people were open to receive literary impulses from abroad. The prose of Swift and Defoe and the eighteenth century essayists had its effects on American writing. Benjamin Franklin, Byrd and Jone show their indebtedness to English prose writers. The essays of Addison and Steele inspired the rise of periodical essays like the 'Tell Tale' series written by a group of students at Harvard.

In the field of verse Dryden and Pope had their sway. American poetry of the seventeenth century which was practically formless

gained from the discipline of the couplet that Dryden and Pope popularised. All the neo-classical trends were faithfully copied. This was in many ways a good thing and it went a long way to secularise literature. "Literature in America had first to be made secular and it was the historic mission of that aspect of the classical world-order called the Enlightenment to liberate American thought and expression from theology.*" As a result the literature produced in the decades just before the Revolution achieved a surprising maturity as is evident in the works of Edwards, Crevecoeur, Benjamin Franklin, Freneau, Paine and others.

Q. 8. Shows how political and social factors had their impact on American literature during the period 1765—1829.

Ans. The period 1765 to 1829 is remarkable in American history as the settlers of the different colonies, who had imigrated from different parts of Europe were now beginning to think of themselves as one people. The fusion in the 'Melting Pot' took place during this period leading on to that sentiment which found expression in the significant phrase "We the people of the United States". The united political power of the Americans was first made manifest with the Stamp Act Congress of 1769, and went on right upto the year 1829 in which the Common man of America was vindicated with Andrew Jackson's becoming the President of the United States. For while the colonies were resisting together the tyrannical imposition of taxes by the British Government, an internal revolution was going on against the aristocracy. Both these trends had great bearing on American Literature.

This was an age of great complexities and problems and rapid changes. The entire western civilization was bearing the weignt of certain clashes, Mercantilism versus Free Trade, Imperialism versus Home Rule, Tory versus Whig and Federalist versus Republican. Since an integral part of American character is the belief in the rights of the individual for his fullest possible development within a free society, providing justice and equality for all, the literature of this period is of great interest and importance. For in the books written and speeches made during this period we come across repeated assertions of this.

This newly awakened National consciousness was of a fierce nature. Americans were becoming extremely sensitive to criti-

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* H. M. Jones: *The Draft to Liberalism in the American Eighteenth Century.*

cism. The idea of inferiority to England was unthinkable. It was this spirit that made them aspire to the creation of a distinctive literature of their own, that had aesthetic and not merely utilitarian interest.

An excellent literature of politics or an equally praiseworthy literature of religion was not enough. The nationalists felt the intense desire to establish a tradition of belles-lettre. If poetry, fiction and the drama were the marks of a great culture, America did not want to lag behind any other country in the possession of these. This was the spirit behind the literary attempts of such writers as Philip Freneau, the Connecticut Wits, William Cullen Bryant and others. This was the attitude that prompted Washington Irving and Cooper to look diligently for material for romance and legends in the annals of American history. It is in the romantic period that we get the finest expression of this spirit.

The political issue produced a spate of writing mostly controversial and polemical. The Whigs and the Tories displayed zeal in arguing out their points of view. Franklin's satirical works "Rules by which a Great Empire May Be Reduced to a Small one" and 'An Edict of the King of Prussia', Thomas Pain's brilliant pamphlets 'Common sense' and 'The American Crisis' were among the most enduring specimens of prose literature of the period. 'The Declaration of Independence' composed by Jefferson remains a classic. Along with the struggle for independence, American literature flowered into an unprecedented grandeur. After the winning of independence the next step was to win cultural independence for America and a complete weaning of American letters from English tradition. This took place with Emerson's declaration of cultural independence.

Q. 9. Give an evaluation of the types of literature written in America during the 'Revolutionary period.'

Ans. The tide of national sentiment that swept over America produced in its wake a genuine interest in belles-lettre in literature that was not merely informational or utilitarian. The writers were more self-conscious and the spread of education created an enlighted public who were ready for finer literature. Accounts of voyages, promotion tracts, sermons, histories and biographies that dominated the literary scene so far were retiring into the background though they continued to be written. Even when propaganda was a motive as in Crevecoeur's letters, it

appeared in an altogether different guise, more subtle than in the early promotion tracts. Jonathan Carver's travels (1778) and Jefferson's notes on the State of Virginia (1782) are examples of the lingering hold of the older types. That a great artist can wield such an old familiar medium was proved later by Edward in his imaginary work 'Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym'.

Sermons still occupied a prominent place in the life of the colonies. But they became freer and more polished. These sermons helped to develop the art of oratory and had considerable influence on political oratory which now became important.

Just as in Elizabethan England the spirit of nationalism gave rise to a great interest in national history, the nationalistic temper of the American people of this period had an immediate effect upon history and biography. A flood of local histories appeared. The Revolution gave a great impetus to this type of writing. The great heroes of the revolution were immortalised and the events recorded with great pride and pleasure. 'The life of Washington' John Marshall is an example of this. Cooper and Irving too made memorable contribution to this type of writing.

The political crisis that confronted America produced a spate of polemical writings. It was only natural that literature of persuasion should have flourished in an age of constant political discussion. Before the war of independence the writings were of the nature of literary debates, between the Whigs and Tories. Pamphlets, speeches, sermons and State papers appeared in profusion. Samuel Adams, James Olis, John Dickenson, Hamilton, and Jefferson represent the Whig side whereas the Tory position was expounded by Jonathan Bondur, Martin Howard Samuel Seabury etc. The impassioned speech of Patrick Henry delivered with its incomparable conclusion 'Give me liberty or give me death' was meant to convince the reluctant colonies to come forward and fight. The patriots made their legal position clear by a well-worked-out political philosophy which they drew from the writings of Thomas Hobbes, Sir Robert Filmer, John Locke, and many other English and European thinkers. The long tradition of theological disputation that these Americans had behind them stood them in good stead now the conflict was political. The literature that presented the thuments in favour of revolution, is remarkable for its clarity of roning and exposition.

When the Revolution became a reality instead of a much discussed possibility there arose a need for another type of writers. The fluctuation of war and the uncertainty of the issue were quite enough to make even those Americans who wanted war, to lose morale. It was at this time that the propagandist had to step in, ready to appeal to the emotions of all kinds of people and keep the flame of national feeling alive. The best among the writers of propagandist literature of this time was Thomas Paine, whose crises papers are easily among the best literature of its type. Poets too contributed liberally towards holding the national sentiment aloft. Freneau wrote a number of patriotic poems. Freneau's 'Memorable Victory' and Hopkins' 'Battle of the Kegs' deserve mention. Innumerable songs and ballads and hymns sprang up like mushrooms, satires like Trumbull's M. Fingal, in imitation of Butler's 'Hudibras' came to be written. The Loyalists who looked down upon the Revolution and the 'rabble' involved in it presented their views through their propagandists. The best among them were Joseph Stansbury and Jonathan Odell.

The most finished achievement of the rhetorical style of this period was the 'Declaration of Independence.' It is a classic in its superb expression clarity and telling effectiveness of phrases and its fine balance of emotion and reason.

The tradition of diarists did not end with Sewall or Bradford. The most important diarist of the period was Woolman, whose diary is of great interest as a perfection of spiritual autobiography. Autobiography must also be regarded as one of the greatest works of the period. It made autobiography accepted as a definite literary form and it remains to this day an American classic.

A new literary genre that came into existence by about this time was the essay. In England Addison and Steele, by the publication of 'The Spectator' established the importance of the essay. It became a thing of beauty when Goldsmith made use of it very soon. The essay jumped the Atlantic and became immensely popular in America. The brevity of the essay, its lightness of touch and its quality of tending itself to the discussion of any subject under the sky made the essay a definite literary asset. By 1722 Franklin was imitating 'The Spectator' in a newspaper run by his brother. He had then published with the signature of 'Silence do Good'. Soon every newspaper was publishing a series of essays while the writers remained safely anonymous. This anonymity however was not a blessing to the essay. For the literary essay is a 'genre' the charm of which depends on the revelation of the

personality and even the idiosyncrasy of the author. As Arthur Bryant has said in his essay 'Art of the Essayist,' the essay must look "as if someone has been doing it himself". The stamp of the author's personality was put on the essay by the time of Irving whose sketch book was a distinctive triumph of the essay. In the meanwhile Crevecoeur's letters paved the way for the growth of the essay. His letters are nothing but delightfully written nature essays.

Just as the essays were the biproduct of American journalism, literary criticism in America was also the result of newspaper and magazine requirements. Poe and Bryant were pioneers in this field.

The reason why colonial literature is altogether deficient in fiction was that puritanism was uncompromisingly hostile to any thing that was 'false'. The waning of puritanism created a healthier atmosphere wherein stories and novels could thrive, though the prejudice against fiction did not disappear completely till about 1800. Even Jefferson and Franklin were not altogether free from the belief that fiction affects the minds of the youth adversely. By about the late 18th century circulating libraries were providing young ladies with romances and the newspapers, though anxious about the effect of fiction on morality, out of reasons of prudence, published them in serials. American writers following the literary trends in England wrote novels with the sentimentality of Richardson. This type had Mrs. Hannah Foster as its exponent. Gothic romance or the novel of sansationalism was popularised by Calek Williams, Brockden Brown and Bracken Bridge. The domestic novel of J. Austen and Fanny Burney and the historical fiction of Walter Scott too found their way to America and soon became naturalised there. But really great success in these fields was achieved only by F. Cooper.

In the case of the short story the usual 'time lag' noticed between the appearance of a new literary genre in England and its imitation in America, is not seen. The Short Story had a relatively even start in international competition, as it was largely dependent upon the magazines. Benjamin Franklin seems to have been one of the pioneers in this field. In the 'Way to Wealth' and 'The Ephemera' he came close to short story writing, for the essay and short story are closely connected.

The drama was also something new in the 18th century America. By about 1750 plays were produced in the play houses

in the south and the Middle colonies. But these were not indigenous, but English. Addison's "Cato" was staged in Philadelphia in 1742. By 1767 the first American play was produced. It was ,The Prince of Parthia' written by the late Thomas Godfrey. Staging of plays was prohibited by the colonists during the years of the struggle for independence. But after the Revolution two playwrights of note emerged. They were Royall Tyler and William Dunlop. Tyler's, 'The Contrast' was first staged in New York in 1787. The plot is reminiscent of 'A School for Scandal.' but the characters and situations are typically American. Dunlop's plays were 'The Father' or "American Shandyism" (1789) "Andre" (1798) and "The Italian Father" (1799).

Q. 10. Who were the outstanding poets of the Revolutionary period in America and how far does their poetry reflect the momentous nature of the time ?

Ans. The eighteenth century is remarkable in the history of the American nation and that of its literature. The soul of the Nation, hungering for freedom found expression in a number of songs and ballads, most of which were composed by authors whose names are not known. The poetic output inspired by the Revolution has a wide range. At one extreme we have the nonsense verse composed to the tune of 'Tankee Doodle.' They are interesting poems written in a mocking vein like 'The Battle of the Kegs' by Francis Hopkenson. 'American Soldier' by Nathaniel Niles is of ascholarly note and the anonymous ballad 'Nathan Hale' has considerable dignity. 'Mifingal' by Trumbull is a satrie done in imitation of Samuel Butler's 'HUDIBRAS. Trumbull and the other youngmen with him, dubbed 'the Hartford Wits' produced much satire. Trumbull's 'Progress of Dullness' seeks to ridicule the academic fashion of teaching young men Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, omitting their own noble literature.

The many songs composed in America during this period have recaptured the spirit of these turbulent times, the haunting rhythm of the drums and the firm tread of eager feet marching to determine the destiny of their Nation. In these songs, we sometimes come across genuine inspiration and powerful expression of feeling. 'Nathan Hale' is an example. Here the unknown singer links nature to the emotions felt by hisucountrymen—a step that anticipates the romantic poets.

'Keep still' said the thrush, as she nestled her young
In a nest by the road, in a nest by the road.

For the tyrants are near, and with them appear
What bodes us no good, what bodes us no good.

An outstanding poet of this period was Joel Barlow (1754-1812). His work 'the Columbiad' is the result of his laudable ambition of lifting literature from its provincial setting and making it truly national. The work in ten books is an epic which is seldom read and hardly ever enjoyed. For it is dull and laboured, though not lacking in heroism. 'The Columbiad', we feel deserves the oblivion that has been its fate. But a shorter poem by Barlow 'The Hasty Pudding' appears as delightful to us as it did to his contemporaries. Instead of the heroism of 'The Columbiad' we have in this poem a delightful mock-heroic tone. The burlesque of the traditional epic invocation to the Muse, and the grandiloquent style used to describe very homely things, make the poem charming. They indicate also Barlow's acqaintance with literature.

Timothy Dwight's (1752-1817) poems 'Columbia' and 'The Conquest of Canaan' are also cast in the heroic mould and are meant to make the people think in terms of a nation. But however noble the aim of the poet, these works too smack of tediousness and are not among the really enjoyable works of this period.

The poetic Muse, during this period seems to have singled out Philip Freneau (1752-1832) as her favourite. The importance that Philip Freneau has in the history of American literature may be understood from the fact that he has been styled "The Father of American Poetry" and "The Father of American Prose", at the same time Freneau's contemporaries priced his patriotic songs and poems far above his other works which are of a purely lyrical quality. Philip Freneau, the poet of the Revolution is seen from such works as 'American Liberty', 'A Political Litany', 'A Mid-Night Consultation', 'America Independent'. 'George the Third's Soliloquy' and 'the British Prison Ship'. The last one was inspired by his own bitter experience as prisoner on board an English ship. Freneau was a product of the age in that the liberalism and the scientific deism of the eighteenth century shaped his poems, political and otherwise. His violent hatred of tyrannical governments made him an ardent supporter of the American and French Revolutions. His political satires are penned-in a language that is sometimes violent. 'To the Memory of the Brave Americans under General Green in South Carolina who fell in the action of Sept. 8, 1781' is one of the best-known poems of Freneau. Inspite of its note of melancholy, the poem

ends on the hopeful note that these brave men have gone to better place :

Now rest in peace, our patriotic band ;
Though far from Nature's limits thrown,
We trust they find a happier land
A brighter sunshine of their own.

This poem and another entitled 'On Passing by an Old Church Yard' remind us of the English poet Thomas Gray and his famous Elegy. The second poem here mentioned is a good example of Freneau's distrust of pomp and aristocracy. 'To an Alien' is yet another poem that shows Freneau's sympathy with political exiles. It gives passionate expression to his love of liberty :

Where you are gone, the soil is free
And freedom sings from every tree
'Come quit the crowd and live with me'.

To the modern reader the romantic aspects of Freneau's poetry are more important than the patriotic elements. We find in his works, the introduction of new themes, like the beauty of nature, charm of solitude, the idea of the noble savage and so on. These themes that declare the approach of romanticism, are treated with genuine poetical inspiration. We see the brilliance of a powerful Fancy at work, a sensitive imagination that responded to any suggestion of the mysterious, the supernatural or the primitive. It is significant that the doctrine of return to Nature that Rousseau propounded finds poetic expression in Freneau's lines :

A hermit's house beside a stream
With Forests planted—round
Whatever it to you may seem
More real happiness I deem
Than if I were a monarch crowned.

There is much in Freneau that is Wordsworthian, though Wordsworth came later. The charming little poem, 'The Wild Honey-Suckle' could certainly have been written by the poet to whom "the meanest flower that blows, gives thoughts that often lie too deep for tears" :

From morning suns and evening dews
At first thy little being came
If noting once, you nothing lose
For when you die, you are the same ;

The space between is but an hour
The frail duration of a flower.

'On a Honey Bee' is a poem that reminds us of the best lines of Keats or Burns.

These poems of Freneau go to prove that American romantic movement did not owe its origin to 'The Lyrical Ballads'. Even as a boy Freneau wrote a poem that invokes Faney 'The Meese's Pride' in whose :

Painted realms reside Endless images of things
Fluttering each on golden wings
Ideals, objects, such a store
The universe could hold no more.

Truly Freneau was "Fancy's child" and so he stands like a shining luminary at the threshold of American Romanticism.

Q. 11. Give a critical estimate of Benjamin Franklin's contribution to American literature. Do you think it has been over-rated ?

Ans. John Adams once said that Benjamin Franklin was "far above Sir Isaac Newton, Frederick the Great or Voltaire in fame." He stated that Franklin was "more believed and esteemed than any or all of them." Indeed Franklin was one of the greatest men of the eighteenth century. His inquiring mind, limitless curiosity, his scientific achievements coupled with his interest in philosophy, his statesmanship and his literary talents have made him a fascinating person.

In the history of American literature Franklin occupies a high place. He attempted more than one literary species and has left his stamp on each one. The most important work of Franklin and his most famous one is his autobiography. Written in a simple and direct style it is the first 'rags to riches' success story in American literature. This book has been responsible for making the autobiography accepted as a literary species and it has legitimately become an American classic. As Franklin avowedly wrote his autobiography for his son, these have entered into it a deep personal touch and an air of intimacy. This book inspite of its obvious merits has exposed Franklin to the charges of excessive materialism that ignores the higher values. It is said that the Poet William Blake wrote on his copy of Bacon's Essays "Good advice from Satan's Kingdom." A feeling slightly akin to this has

coloured the criticism of many who declare Benjamin Franklin too wordly—wise to their taste. The fact is that Franklin was pragmatic and full of common sense even when he was a philosopher and a scientist. An enigmatic mixture of the idealist and the realist, he came closer to being the typical Amerieau than any other figure of his time.

'Poor Richard's Almanac' has been a work to which was accorded great popularity and acclaim. The work has been translated into several languages. The great popularity of the work may be traced to the age-old love for proverbs and also to the dominance of the bourgeois philosophy of life during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Though the maxims are not always original, Franklin showed great originality in presenting them through the mouth of one character against a suitable background. Even to old and familiar saying he has given a smoothness and charm and the flavour of a quaint humour. For instance "The cat in gloves catches no mice" sounds much better than the old Scottish proverb "A gloved cat was never a good mouser". Such simple charm and some strikingly picturesque passages have made the Almanac a much loved book.

More interesting than the 'Autobiography' and 'Poor Richard's Almanac' are the little pieces that Franklin penned like 'The Whistle', 'The Ephemera' and 'The Dialogue between Franklin and the Gout.' In these small pieces we have the beginning of two important literary forms—the personal essay as well as the short story. Here Franklin shows a readiness to talk about himself and to reveal to the reader his own mistakes and foibles. This trait has endeared him to his readers almost in the way Charles Lamb's Essays have endeared him to numberless readers. 'The Whistle' is a delightful essay based on one of Franklin's experiences in his childhood. The fact that as a boy he gave too much for a whistle starts him on the philosophic reflection "in short I conceive that great part of the miseries of mankind are brought upon them by their giving too much for their whistle." 'The Ephemera' also written as a letter to his friend Madame Brillon has a deeply serious theme clothed in an intimate and light form. Franklin explains how his ability to understand all "the inferior animal tongues" enabled him to follow the conversation of the insects ephemerae which he claims set him 'thinking' on the transcience of life. The insect philosopher seems to be an original and interesting mouth-piece for Franklin's views on life

and its evanescent nature. The essay is remarkable for its stubbed hu.nour and its delicately expressed pathos.

The great mind of Franklin could assess the political trend of his time fully. He understood the flaw in the British government and he could sympathise with the Revolutionaries. His diagnosis of the situation and his instinctive grasp of the issues involved were accurate. 'Rules by which a Great Empire May be Reduced' is a classic. With heavy Sarcasm and pungent criticism, Franklin tries here to bring home to the British Government the thousand ways in which it forfeited the trust and loyalty of the people of America. The thorough grasp of the rules on which an empire should be based, and the prophetic vision that Franklin displays in this work bring to our mind the eloquent plea that Burke made to a deaf parliament in favour of reconciliation with American colonies. Many sentences in this great piece are reminiscent of Burke's famous words "Magnanimity in politics is not seldom the truest wisdom and a big empire and a little mi nd go ill together". In 'Edict of the King of Prussia' Benjamin Franklin continues his frank criticism of the British. This work along with the 'Rules' reveals the author as one who can wield the Swiftian weapon of irony with deadly effect and a disarming look of innocence.

In the course of his writings, Franklin has said much about style and purpose of writing that is important as specimens of early American literay criticism. In his Preface to the Pennsylvania Gazette, Franklin observed that "a good writer should proceed regularly from things known to things unknown distinctly and clearly without confusion. The words should be the most expressive that the language affords, provided that they are the most generally understood. Nothing should be expressed in two words that can be as well expressed in one......The words should be placed as to be agreeable to the ear in reading; summarily it should be smooth, clear and short, for the contrary qualities are displeasing." This reveals Franklin as a conscientious and scrupulous artist who always aims at clarity and directness, economy of expression. It is remarkable that along with these qualities he insists on the musical quality of words. In his own writings Franklin avoided the extravagant splendour of Renaissance prose. Perhaps it was his reading of Bunyan and Swift and Defoe that made it possible for him to achieve the remarkable directness and simplicity of his prose. From the terse irony of

his political writings to the ease and charm of his bagatelles, Franklin's prose is always highly polished, graceful and durable. His style his infinite range ; it was effective in the letters, the autobiography, the scientific reports, the sophisticated bagatelle, and the essay. Surely only a master of language could wield it so smoothly and with such exquisite grace and ease. No wonder Franklin earned international reputation and became the most beloved and the most widely-read of all early American writers. Franklin himself claimed "prose writing was a principal means of my advancement." Cowper called Benjamin Franklin "one of the most important in the literary world." The Philosopher Hume echoed the sentiment of the intellectual world when he wrote to Franklin, "You are the first philosopher, and indeed the first great man of letters for whom we are beholden to her" (America). The praise is great but well merited.

Q. 12. Give an assessment of the non-political prose writings of the age of enlightenment.

Ans. The eighteenth century was the age of reason. Religion was becoming less important than before. Man's conceptions of the world and God were fast changing. Newtonian ideas were becoming immensely popular, and the light of these, even religion had to be recast. In an age of such breadth of vision and liberal tendencies, prose became very important as the vehicle of expression. The new doctrines and novel interpretation of things that were stirring within men had to be written down. Hence in this period in America we have a tremendous output of prose literature apart from the political writings.

Among the lesser prose writers of the period may be mentioned John Woolman (1720-1772). He was the author of 'A Word of Remembrance and Caution to the Rich' which appealed to the Fabian Society and its members. His journal is also eminently readable. Charles Lamb once exhorted people to "get the writings of John Woolman by heart." Surely such a remark from Lamb would not have come unless there was some merit in the writer. William Bartram (1739-1823) Alexander Wilson (1766-1813) and Merriwether Lewis (1774-1809) were among the writers of this period. Wilson's 'American Anthology' is an admirable work, a classic of its kind, in nine volumes with clear, accurate and charming plates. Merriwether Lewis who became Jefferson's Secretary and leader of the expedition to the West

produced the work 'History of the Expedition Under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark' (1814).

Greater than these, and certainly a memorable figure in American literary history is Michel-Guillaume Jean de Crevecoeur (1735-1813). This French man who applied for naturalization in New York, married and settled down on Orange County farm and lived for nearly fifteen years as a gentleman farmer has produced a brilliant work which reflects the American spirit and life and at the same time remains a landmark in American prose. All the time that Crevecoeur was in America he was busily jotting down his impressions and his views on things around him. His moderate views and his aloofness from the political issues that were sweeping over the country, made both the Whigs and the Tories suspicious of him. He was forced to leave America with the manuscripts. The publisher in London obviously chose the least anti-revolutionary pieces for 'Letters from an American Farmer' (1782). Those papers which were of strong Tory views were not published until 1925 when they were included in sketches of Eighteenth Century America.

Crevecoeur reflects the tendencies of his age. He expresses many of the revolutionary ideals which operated powerfully in the eighteenth century, first in America and then in France. With all his admiration for Social progress, he believed like Rousseau in the return to Nature. The glowing account that he gives of life on the American farms and of the pleasures of farming is an expression of primitivism, an idea that was fast becoming popular. He shared Jefferson's enthusiasm for agriculture for both these men could visualise an agrarian society free from the restraints of governmental interference and also free from the evils that attend the life in the towns and cities. The liberalism of the age was also found in Crevecoear, who disliked all organised religions. He was strongly anticlerical and his views on traditional religious beliefs were almost like those of Thomas Paine. It is however in his recognition of the forces of unification working in America that Crevecoeur seems to be most interesting. It is he who first made use of the idea of America being a melting pot. It is he who thought of the American as someone distinct, someone whose navalstring with England and Europe was severed. "What then is the American, this new man ?" asks Crevecoeur in his 'Letters'. He then gives the answer : "He is an American, who leaving behind him all his

ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embranced, the new Government he obeys, the new rank he holds. He becomes an American by being received in the broad lap of our great Alma Mater. Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men whose labours and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world."

This sensitive and keen mind that felt one with Nature had also the power to communicate his emotional experience to the readers. In his enthusiasm he was apt to dramatize things at times. But there is great sincerity in his writings. A friend described him as "a philanthropist ; a man of serene temper and pure benevolence. The milk of human kindness circulated in every vein."

Crevecoeur was not without defects. His excessive faith in the soil was exaggerated. But the faults in his philosophy should not make us blind to his great merits as a writer. He wrote well following the fashion of his day and shaping his writings in the form of letters. But in these letters were the germs of three literary forms—the prose essay, the short story and the dramatic dialogue. It may be pointed out that Crevecoeur has had in mind the motive of propaganda, and that much that he wrote was idealisation of things ignoring the truth. But literary enjoyment is not affected by veracity of facts and a reader who takes up Crevecoeur's Letters cannot but admire the literary grace of the work.

A considerable slice of the prose work of period came from the pen of Benjamin Franklin. Apart from the political writings Franklin wrote much that makes him one of the greatest prose writers of America. His early contributions to American newspapers are some of the best specimens of early American journalistic writing. 'A Dissertatation on Liberty and Necessity, Pleasure and Pain' published in 1725 is among these. 'The Busy Body Papers' and poor Richard's 'Almanac' were writings that made Benjamin Franklin very popular with his contemporaries. His autobiography remains a classic in American literature. Its informality and humour was much admired and the work has been responsible for popularising the autobiography as a literary form. Franklin's smaller pieces of writing like 'The Ephemera', 'The Whistle', 'Morals of Chess', 'Dialogue between Franklin and

the Gout' anticipate the personal essay as well as the short story. Practical and idealistic, and scientist and a humanitarian, Franklin was a typical product of the age. Puritan influences were still dominant in him as is evident from the string of qualities that he has tabulated for self-improvement. But he was susceptible to the literary influences of Defoe, Bunyan, Swift, Addison and Locke. It is his style that displays Franklin's indebtedness to these writers.

The most sensational non-political work of the eighteenth century was 'The Age of Reason' by Thomas Paine. The first part of this was published in 1794 and th e second in 1795. Paine wrote this work as his "last offering" to mankind. His avowed aim was to endow mankind with a new religion that was compatible with the tremendous changes that had come over the political, social and intellectual horizons. His political pamphlets 'Comnonseas' 'the American Crisis' had already given evidence of an incredible power of persuasion and eloquence. With the same clarity of thought and force of expression he presented arguments meant to strike at the root of the established church. The work gave rise to such a furore that many felt Paine should be burned for blasphemy. Indeed many things that he said against Christianity were sure to sound as blasphemy, to the believers. But Paine was not an atheist as was believed in a benovolent God. In unequivocal terms he declared : "I believe in one God and no more". His religion was Deism about which he has this to say : "The only religion that has not been invented and that has in it every evidence of divine originality, is pure and simple Deism. It must have been the first and will probably be the last that man believes." He then goes on to explain what Deism implies. "Were man impressed as fully and strongly as he ought to be with the belief, of a God, his moral life would be regulated by the force of that belief, he would stand in awe of God and of himself, and would not do the thing that could not be cancelled from either. To give this belief the full opportunity of force it is necessary that it act alone. "This is Deism." Resolutely Paine turns away from all Churches declaring "My own mind is my own church." In his exaltation of reason Paine was a typical child of his age, the eighteenth century which believed in order and consistency and was thoroughly committed to the mathematical world-view of Sir Isaac Newton according to whom this universe is a smooth-running, well-organised rationally-conducted machine. Thomas Paine was a writer who had always a strong purpose in writing. While his political purposes were hailed with ethusiasm, his

religious purposes brought upon him bitter denouncement. But about his merits as a writer, there can be no dispute. No man of his time was better able to express, simply and clearly, views which effected vast changes in political, social and religious constitution of western civilization. The force, directness and variety of his appeals to reason and emotion made him the foremost propagandist-agitator of his time. A master of persuasion rather than a profound or original thinker, he will be studied as long as there are men who seek to understand the social functions of language and literature."[1]

Q. 13. "If literature was the handmaid of theology in the colonial period, it was the handmaid of politics during the Revolutionary period." Discuss.

Ans. To the colonial settlers in America the most important concern was religion. The Puritans who fled to a new country because of their burning zeal for religious reforms, naturally were preoccupied with religious controversy. Hence the vast majority of Puritan literature is of a religious nature. Sermons, theological treatises, soul-searching diaries are all evidence of this. By the second half of the eighteenth century, however, signs of drastic changes were made manifest in America. The age known as the Age of Reason and Enlightenment naturally saw the weakening of religious hold over the people. While many grew lax and liberal in their outlook on religion, there were a few who were daringly outspoken in their criticism of established churches. Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* is the supreme example of this. In this work we find the most splendid exposition of the claims of Reason.

Along with the weakening of religion there was a sudden surging of patriotic feelings among the people. The growing discontent with the policy of the British government and the smouldering ill-feeling regarding the levy of unjust taxes were ready to burst into a flame of open revolt. There was a clash between the Whigs and the Tories, or the Patriots and the Loyalists. This clash naturally yielded a literature rich in political controversy. The writings of the Loyalists however did not attract much attention.

James Otis (1725-1783) was a writer supporting the Revolution. His work *Rights of the British Colonists Asserted and*

1. *The Literature of the United States, An Anthology and a History* By Walter Blair, Theodore Hornberger and Randall Stewart.

Proved was the basis of the cry "No taxation without representation."

John Dickinson (1732-1808) was a pamphleteer and statesman of this time. Though he advocated conciliation he was truly "the penman of the Revolution". "Late Regulations respecting the British colonies............considered" was an attack on the Stamp Act. His *Letters from a Framerin in Pennsylvania* were cautious and conciliatory in tone. Samuel Adams was an agitator and pamphleteer who wrote a stream of pamphlets under many pseudonyms.

Greater than these Francis Hopkinson (1737-1791) who was blessed with a keen wit and a pleasing style. *A Pretty Story* is a clever satire on the conduct of British government. It is supposed to be the account of the owner of an Old Farm who gave his good-for-nothing New Farm to one of his sons. When the son, through his industry and skill had made it a fine place the father demanded it of him. The lesson of this story was obvious. Hopkinson who was a representative of the most cultured-Americans of the time, was among those who signed the Declaration.

More sensational than the writings of all these were the works of Thomas Paine (1737-1809). In 1775 Thomas Paine published his fifty page pamphlet *Common Sense.* This was a daring attack on the British Crown and an eloquent plea for revolt. Written in a vigorous flamboyant style, it remains one of the most interesting pieces of propaganda literature ever penned. Paine ridicules the idea of hereditary monarchy ahd proclaims that one honest man was worth more to society "than all the crowned ruffians that ever lived." Paine's conviction was that "nothing can settle our affairs so expeditiously as an open and determined Declaration of Independence."

"The Present time" he wrote in *Common Sense*, "is that peculiar time which never happens to a nation but once viz., the time of forming itself into a government. Most nations have let slip the opportunity, and by that means have been compelled to receive laws from their conquerors instead of making laws for themselves, but from the error of other nations let us learn "wisdom and lay hold of the present opportunity, to being Government at the right end." In the uncertain stages of the revolutionary war, when morale was sinking Paine kept the spirit of the nation by publishing the *Crisis* papers. The first number of *The*

American Crisis was written when prospects were bleak for the patriots. Paine knew how to restore optimism, how to rouse the Fading enthusiasm. The very opening of the paper is superb. These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country, but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Altogether in Thomas Paine America had a propagandist of genius whose skill in moving men to action has seldom been rivalled. The passion that throbs in his writings has made his prose vital and effective.

Among the orators of the period, the greatest was Patrick Henry. His "Speech in the Virginia Convention" deserves to be ranked along with the greatest speeches in the English language. It was the eve of the Revolutionary War. The southereners were asking the question whether they should fight if war broke out in the north. In his speech Patrick Henry answered the question, carrying away his audience by the sheer force and eloquence of his speech which ended on the magnificent note "as for me, give me liberty, or give me death."

Benjamin Franklin also contributed his share to the political writings of this period in the form of two brilliant satires "Rules by which a Great Empire May be Reduced to a small one" and "An Edict of the King of Prussia."

One of the greatest luminaries of the period was Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) who later became the third president of the United States. This man who embodied the ideals of his day has left his mark upon American politics and American literature. His words are the scriptures of the American faith in democracy and common man, of the nation's trust in popular education and of its belief in individualism. Jefferson rightly considered the Declaration of Independence as the contribution for which he was most likely to be remembered by later generations. Though not strictly original, it is a momentous work, an unexcelled model of skilful rhetoric, George Washington's Farewell Address is one of the gems of literary prose. It is looked upon as a classic statement of American foreign policy and also a well-considered warning against the danger that can result from faction. Washington's writings are voluminous and form an impressive contribution to the political literature of the period.

What Jefferson called "the best commentary on the principles of Government that ever was written" was Alexander

Hamilton's "The Federalist". Alexander Hamilton (1757-1804) was a soldier, statesman, lawyer and politician and incidentally a writer. But what he wrote illustrates his power of reasoning and lucidity of expression. Being well informed Hamilton could give his thoughts convincing authority and he strikes us as one of the greatest practitioners of argument in American literature.

When the bulk of political writings is taken into account we feel that literature indeed was the effective instrument with which politicians sought to gain their ends. But politics did not stifle literary creativity of the age. In poetry and in non-political writings we find a refreshing originality during this period. Belles-lettre had come into existence. The writer was breathing freer and healthier air and literature was well on its way to greatness. The political situation far from affecting literature adversely actually conferred on it a many-sided boon.

Q. 14. Discuss the social, economic and political changes that appeared in the first half of the 19th century.

Ans. The first quarter of the 19th century witnessed a number of changes in the American literary scene. By this time literature finally emerged. The literature of the 17th century was primarily religious and that of the 18th century dedicated to politics. It was the 19th century that finally saw the emergence of a type of writing that could truly be called belles lettre. The spirit of romanticism, though, felt in stray instances previously had now become unmistakably evident. Although no given set of conditions can be given to account for the rise of romanticism in America, it is possible to mention certain factors as representative of the many and complex channels through which this movement became influential in the literature of America.

In the first place American Literature had to keep pace with the rapid strides that the country was taking in physical developments. Florida, Texas, California and Alaska had all been acquired and made part of the United States. Streams of migration moved in all directions pushing the boundaries of the nation farther and farther. The excellent huntsmen and fighters who formed the exodus to the southern and south-western countries have been pictured in the stories of Bret Harte and Mark Twain. From 1845 onwards there appeared an enormous impetus in foreign immigration, which had become considerably small. The disastrous famine in Ireland and the rigid suppression of revolutionary movements in Europe were the main reasons for this. These imigrants contri-

buted to the vastness in size and population that the United States was now assuming.

With the constant and seemingly endless expansion came the improvement of communications. The federal highway, the net-work of canals and later of railroads linked all sections of America and helped to bring together the industrial East and the grain and cattle-producing West. Manufacture was vying with agriculture in importance and improved machinery gave great profit to those engaged in manufacture and commerce. Yankee ships, for a time, even rivalled those of Great Britain in establishing commercial contacts with China, India and other important trading centres of the world.

With the speeding up of manufacture there came up the commercial class which had great importance. Industrial prosperity while raising the standard of living also brought about a great differentiation of classes, especially in the East. In the West, where farming was still the chief interest the cleavage was not so marked as in the East. The South raised cotton and tobacco and was preoccupied with these and politics. The discovery of gold in California in 1848 induced a rush of adventurers and fortune hunters to that place.

These social and economic changes caused a change in the character of the population and also in their interests. People were beginning to throw themselves into some movement or other. The Abolition Movement, and those that clamoured for the prevention of war, the rights of the poor, the rights of women, prison reform and temperance were the most important of these. An important civilizing angency of this time was the bulk of newspapers and magazines. The cultural life of the countty was much influenced at this stage also by the Lyceum, an institution meant to spread knowledge. "The Lyceum provided lectures, debates, concerts and entertainments of other kinds and enligh-tened its audiences of philosophical, literary, scientific and educational matters. Through this agency Emerson broadcast his doctrine of self-reliance, which synchronised with the dominant individualism of the time."[1]

Journalism assumed by now a refreshing change. Its belligerently political aspect gave place to news features, diversified literary material and humour. Among the leading

1 *A College Book of American Literature* by Profs. Milton Ellis, Louis Pound and George W. Spohn.

newspapers mention may be made of the *New York Evening Post* (founded in 1801), the *Sun* (1833), the *Herald* (1835) and the *Times* (1841). Important journals such as *The North American Review, The Atlantic Monthly, Harpers Magazine* came into existence. *The Dial* served as the vehicle of American transcendentalists and *Godey's Lady's Book* catered to the feminine readers by giving over-sentimentalized literary matter, designed to foster elegance and refinement.

Education received greater attention than before. More free public schools were established and colleges and universities also multiplied. The eagerness for giving educational advantages to the common man was one aspect of the advance of democracy that had its great triumph in the election of President Andrew Jackson.

With the removal of Puritan strictness, amusements gradually became popular. Hence theatres now assumed an importance that they hitherto did not enjoy. Theatrical companies sprang up in cities and professional players toured over the country giving performances. Though translations of European plays of a romantic nature were much in demand, American plays too were staged. Arts such as painting and architecture also flourished during this period. Architecture was mostly classical at this stage and in painting the "back to nature" movement was becoming popular.

These were some of the socio-economic-political factors that made the romantic movement possible in America. The climate had changed and the atmosphere was congenial now for the production of a purely aesthetic literature which won universal acclaim.

Q. 15. What were the conditions that favoured the rise of romanticism in America ?

Ans. In England the classicism of the Augustan Age was followed by the great romantic revolt. Something identical happened in America as well for the nineteenth century witnessed a marked reaction against the age of Reason. Newton who swayed the thought of eminent writers and philosophers, Locke, and Pope were beginning to be deemed less important. Everywhere there was the breathlessness of something new—a new attitude to man, to nature and to the supreme deity. All over Europe the change from classicism to romanticism was evident. America too was receptive to the new ideals that were in the air.

One important reason for this is that between the years 1815 and 1820—a period generally considered by many literary historians as the "pivotal period" in the rise of romanticism there was a great incentive among educated young Americans to travel abroad. A tour of Europe was considered as essential part of a young man's education. Notable among those who undertook such journeys were Edward Everett and George Tickner who came into close association with English and German romanticism. These young men on their return to America occupied prominent positions which enabled them to popularise the new spirit which they had imbibed while abroad. Others followed their example and the most illustrious among them of course was Washington Irving whose meeting with Sir Walter Scott was a great blessing for American literature. Irving was already a romantic at heart, and his decided leaning towards romanticism was confirmed by his experience abroad. He owed much to Fielding, Sterne and Goldsmith : but his greast indebtedness was to Scott and the German romanticists Ludwing Tieck and E. T. A. Hoffman.

There was another major factor that opened the gates of America to the flood of romanticism. During the period under consideration, there were published in America the works of European romantic writers. Among them the greatest popularity was enjoyed by Byron. This is evident from the numerous American editions of his poems. Wordsworth was another English poet who influenced poetical through across the Atlantic. The influence of Wordsworth is seen in the American poet of the 19th century, William Cullen Bryant. No merely Bryant's *Thanatopsis*, but his smaller pieces like *To the Waterfowl* and *The Yellow Violet*, may be taken as examples. It was no wonder that Bryant was Wordsworthian to a great extent for he was brought up (luckily for a poet) in contact with hills and woods and unsophisticated people and also with good books, the most important of which happened to be Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads*. Coleridge too was loved by the Americans and so was Shelley. Coleridge influenced not poetry so much as literary criticism. The noted German literary critics, the Schlegels too made important contributions in this direction for their lectures on literature were instrumental in the spread of romantic critical theory.

All these external factors would not have effected a great change in American literature had not the intellectual climate within the country been favourable for the spread of romanticism. Political, social and economic conditions had changed tremenously and old notions were crumbling. The democratic

principles in which America had all along believed were more firmly reasserted than ever before, but in other spheres, people were showing greater and greater dissatisfaction with old values and ideas. Rationalism and neoclassicism were found to be wanting, as they somehow did not come close to the common man and his experience. Newton's conception of a well-ordered cosmos was perfectly satisfactory to the people of the eighteenth century. This no longer satisfied the people of the next century. The old beliefs concerning the deity, nature and man were all weakening. It was evident that America was sighing for a new creed, a new movement, intellectual and aesthetic and philosophic, for the old order had to go and give place to something new.

No discussion of the factors that favoured the changes in the American literary life in the early nineteenth century would be complete without mention of the agencies which furthered the spread of the new literary spirit. Journals of a high literary standard now stepped into the picture. In 1815 was founded the *North American Review*. Other important periodicals now gave to writers the long-awaited chance of publication. Another interesting literary vehicle emerged during this period in the form of the "gift book." Most important of the "gift books" was Samuel Goodrich's annual gift book called *The Token* which was enormously popular. We can understand the important part played by the gift books when we recall the significant fact that it was in the pages of *The Token* that the poems, sketches and tales of Nathaniel Hawthrone first appeared.

The lyceum which haunted for literary talents and developed them was a very influential literary agency: It created the proper climate for the discussion and dissemination of new ideas and literary theories. Education which had assumed by now enlarged dimensions, and the improvement and extension of transport facilities fostered the spread of the spirit of romanticism.

Many-sided developments within the country, the facilities for travel abroad, and the tremendous impact of English and continental literature thus rapidly brought about in America the creation of a new literature which in its freshness and freedom, in its colourfulness and expansiveness has been likened by critics such as F. O. Matthiessen to a reassertion of the spirit of the Renaissance.

Q. 16. Describe the features of Romanticism, manifest in the American Literature of the nineteenth century.

Ans. The spirit of romanticism that swept over America in the first half of the nineteenth century was a many-splendoured thing. It had many features many of which are discernible in the literature of England and the Continent during this period.

Romanticism meant a break-away from the rigid restraints of classicism. English romantic writers rose in revolt against the tyranny of the monotonous heroic couplet and revived and experimented in other and freer forms of versification. In America too there appeared an immense variety of literary genres and verse forms such as blank verse, octosyllabic lines, the Spenserian stanza, the sonnet, the ode, the lyric and the metrical romance. The need for freedom and fresh avenues was expressed by the poet William Cullen Bryant in his essay on American Poetry, where he condemns the practice of copying eighteenth century poetical tradition : "The imagination is confined to one trodden circle, doomed to the chains of a perpetual mannerism and condemned to tinkle the same eternal tune with its fetters." Romantics like Thoreau and Emerson rejected the set pattern of the eighteenth century and the liberation of the verse was complete in Walt Whitman.

Far more significant were the changes that romanticism ushered in into the subject-matter and its treatment in literature. The purely rational held no longer any delights for the poet and the reader and there was a pronounced preference for the imaginative. This led to the diligent search for the unfamiliar, and the strange, even the terrible. The spirit that made Shelley compare the very familiar picture of the autumn leaves being scattered by the west-wind to the strange and totally unfamiliar picture of "ghosts from an enchanter fleeing" was at work everywhere. This trend resulted in the "naturalization" in literature of the grotesque. The Augustan contempt for Gothic barbarities yielded to a sympathetic understanding and a nostalgic appreciation of medieval things. Gothic architecture and literature and medieval chivalry gripped the interest of the people. As Prof. Grierson says, "No epoch of the past was so rich in imagination-stirring quality, so varied in emotional content, so capable of supplying the poet with moving subjects as the great Christian age, the age that built that Cathedrals, the age of chivalry and knightly ideals of spiritual symbolism and passionate loyalties". In England this romantic interest in the remote, shadowy and enchanted middle

age brought to literature a number of haunted castles and fantastic contrivances. In American literature however this manifested in a different manner in the highly effective use of the malign and grotesque in psychological form. Poe and Hawthorne were the two superb craftsmen who could wield with enviable ease this difficult material. Something that was almost as important to the romantics as the Middle Ages was the Orient. The Transcendentalists studied the sages and poets of the East. Thoreau speaks of the *Scriptures of the Nation* or the "collected scriptures or Sacred Writings of the Several Nations, the Chinese, the Hindus, the Persians, the Hebrews and others" which would make the true Bible.

Romantic imagination while reaching out to grab the essential beauty of the past, sought to bring the halo of strangeness and charm even around the most familiar. This aspect of the romantic movement is vividly explained by Wordsworth in the *Lyrical Ballads*, where he speaks of taking situations from common life and "throwing over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect". This is precisely what Edgar Allen Poe expects poetry to do, as is evident from his criticism. This is what other romantic poets of America like Bryant and Whitman also emphasised. Poe taught that the end of poetry is to express the yearning for the beautiful—the desire not of the beauty we see, but of the beauty we dream. This leads to the obvious conclusion that poetry—all great art in fact—is necessarily freed from any obligation to fact. To change the actual occurrences of life as he pleases in order to reproduce the ideal is not merely the privilege of the poet, it is his duty. "We struggle by multiform combinations among the things and thoughts of Time to attain a portion of that Loveliness whose very elements, perhaps appertain to Eternity alone". There were on the other hand poets Lowell who decried this unbridled imagination that seemed to be a part and parcel of romanticism.

With the romantic movement Nature became very important in American literature. The fresh interest in Nature was reflected in its faithful, particularized reproduction in the imagery of poetry and in the romantic landscape of fiction. Even before the romantic movement, Nature had found its way into the works of such poets as Freneau. But it was to the nineteenth century poets that Nature had become a major concern. Wordsworth's

great love of Nature had its counterpart on the other side of the ocean for American poets like Bryant and Emerson ardently believed in the essential kinship between man and Nature. In the opening of Bryant's poem *Thanatopsis*, we get these highly Wordsworthian lines :

> *To him who in the love of Nature holds*
> *Communion with her visible forms, she speaks—*
> *A various language.*

Similar thoughts are set dwon by Emerson in his book *Nature*. "The lover of nature", asserts Emerson, "is he whose inward senses are still truly adjusted to each other." That he himself was a true lover of Nature is clear from his bold assertion that the fields and woods "nod to me and I to them." He also believed Nature to be hieroglyphs, for "every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact."

The influence of Sir Walter Scott was also responsible for making the treatment of Nature an essential part of literary technique. In his poems and novels Scott used the Scottish landscape as a setting for his narrative, and successfully dealt on its beauty. Washington Irwing, responding to Scott, began in American literature the potent tradition of the romantic landscape. Much of the charm of the short stories *Rip Van Winkle* and *The Legend of the Sleepy Hollow* depends on this. In Cooper's *Leather Stocking Tales* we find fuller expression of this. Hence we may say that Cooper had a great share in establishing the romantic landscape in American fiction.

Not merely the gentle, pleasing aspects of Nature were noticed and set down. Her far wider faces, "savage and awful, though beautiful" (Thoreau's *The Main Wood*) found favour with the writers. The vast areas and rugged strength of the landscape filled the minds of the poets with unbounded expectancy of the future greatness of the country. It is with pride that Irwing exclaimed in his Introduction to *The Sketch Book* about America's "mighty lakes, like oceans of liquid silver ; her valleys teeming with wild fertility ; her tremendous cataracts thundering in her solitudes, her boundless plains, waving with spontaneous verdure; her broad, deep rivers, rolling in solemn silence to the ocean ; her trackless forests, where vegetation puts forth all its magnificence". This feeling finds expression also in Bryant's *The Prairies* and *Than*[illegible] Longfellow's *Evangeline* and *Hiawatha*.

As a result of this new spirit of romanticism, the individual became important. There was an increased awareness of the significance of the individual and of the importance of personality and the varieties of emotional response which manifested itself in the expansion of lyricism. Burns and Thomas Moore were much admired in America and the great popularity of Byron made the personal lyric become one of the dominant literary froms in America.

Emerson was a great exponent of the cult of the individual. "Trust thysel", he said, "............if the single man plant himself indomitably on his instincts and there abide, the huge world will come round to him". He believed that who so would be a man must be a non-conformist. "The root and seed of democracy is the doctrine, judge for yourself. Reverence thyself". The individualism that the romantics upheld was quite different from the rational individualism of the age of Franklin and Jefferson, for reason was no longer exalted. In its place feeling-the-heart, the seat of emotion—came to be praised. The entire gamut of human emotion—joy, love, rapture, longing, fear, regret, hope faith—all these were richly reflected in the literature of the romantics. An unquenchable curiosity and an infinite longing for beauty were two of the most powerful emotions felt. As Walter Pater has said, "It is the addition of curiosity to the desire of beauty that constitutes the romantic temper. The essential elements then, of the romantic spirit are curiosity and the love of beauty." Edgar Allen Poe illustrates these qualities of romanticism. His verse and story show this effort to reach to 'the beauty above.' Longfellow, the dreamer of dreams and Whitman—"I am he that aches with love"—handled as material for literature the vibrant human emotions.

Closely related to the interest in the individual was an interest in the ordinary man and the familiar in human experiences. English poets like Thomas Gray, Burns, Goldsmith, Wordsworth had shown the sacredness of the common man, an idea that was particularly congenial to American temperament. James Fenimore Cooper loved the common man and all his stories throb with this feeling for what Melvile called 'The Kingly Commons.' "The search for a common denominator of life and of a democratic society is a major force in the works of Whittier, Thoreau, Emerson and Whitman".[1] Whitman emphatically declared, everything

1 Profs : C. A. Brown & J. T. Flanagan : *American Literature—A College Survey.*

comes out of the people, the people as you find them ; not university people, not F. F. V. people". Emerson, recognising the latent powers of every man said, "Each man shall feel the world is his and man shall treat with man as a sovereign state within a sovereign state". Whittier endowed the life of the farmer and the shoe-maker with a new dignity and in his beautiful poem *Snow-Bound* he recaptured the charm of ordinary every day things and what Emerson had called "the meaning of household life." Whittier, like Wordsworth believed also in making use of a very simple style, using words in the every-day speech of the people about whom he wrote.

Antiquarianism, or an interest in the past was another major literary trend of the times. Scott's metrical and historical romances had an enormous influence in this direction. It was Washington Irving who set American imagination unmistakably along the path towards the past. Making use of materials from his native Hudson River Valley from England and from Spain, Irving wrote some of the finest historical legends in American literature. His *Sketch Book*, *Knickerbockers' History of New York*, *Bracebridge Hall* and *The Alhambra* are the best examples of this. Longfellow chose themes from the American past in three of his major poems, *Evangeline*, *Hiawatha* and *The Courtship of Miles Standish*. American writers received a lot of encouragement for resorting to historical fiction from *The North American Review*. It pointed out the rich materials America offered for historical fiction and suggested that the historical romance already popularised by Scott represented a recognized literary form that might be adapted in America for a national literature. James Fenimore Cooper quickly responded and his works such as *The Spy*, *Lionel Lincoln*, *She Wept of Wish-ton-Wish* demonstrated that American history, native characters and the picturesque American landscape were excellent materials for fiction.

The interest in the past menifested itself in yet another way. This was the spirit of regionalism. Here again Scott provided the inspiration. The regional element in *Waverly*, *Guy Mannering* and *The Heart of Midlothian* were copied by Mrs. Child, Mrs. Cheney and Mrs. Cushing who published regional novels of colonial and revolutionary days. James Kirke Paulding's *Koningsmarke* (1823), depicts life in the early Swedish settlement on the Delware and *The Dutchman's Fireside* (1831) is an imaginative recreation of life in upper New York during the French and Indian war. The frontier and the plantations were fertile materials for fiction. The

Western frontier especially had a powerful effect upon the national imagination. Though several writers wrote about the frontier it was Mark Twain who won distinction for his superb blending of fact, humour and sentiment.

It was at this period that the American Indian was recognised as a powerful source for literature. "The Indian tribes were perhaps the best evidences of America's past and only authentic 'ruins' which America could produce, since it lacked the mouldering castles of Europe." Cooper with his *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826) began the tradition of the idealised portrait of the Indian. Famous books in this tradition are, William Gilmore Simms's *The Yemassee* (1835) and Robert Montgomery Bird's, *Nick of the Woods* (1837), John Augustine Stone's *Metamora* introduced the Indian into drama and Longfellow's *Hiawatha* (1855) remains the most significant of numerous poetic narratives utilising Indian themes.

Last but not least there was romantic idealism or transcendentalism, which emerged after 1830 in the works of Emerson, Thoreau, Margaret Fuller and William Ellery Channing. This movement, though it had foreign roots was essentially a native one deriving its distinctive pattern from the New England Puritan background. Transcendentalism was based on the synthesis of various religious philosophical doctrines. Platonism, the fountain head of all philosophic idealism, the Oriental Scriptures, and the works of German philosophers, Kent, Hegel, Schelling, these were the formative influences. At the core of transcendentalist thought lay certain clear, concepts. One was the recognition of imagination or intuition as a faculty that enables man to transcend sense, experience and logic and to arrive at a direct apprehension of reality. Nature was accepted as the symbol of the spirit that is immanent in all universe. The divinity of man was stressed and in turn insisted on the right of the individual to develop himself to the maximum of his potentiality without material or social pressures. The transcendentalist view of literature discarded neo-classical concepts of imitation and correctness and regarded the literary work as the organic expression of the intuited vision of the artist.

Transcendentalism was truly a liberating force of the period and it definitely was a blessing to literature as it gave to American literature not only a new significant aesthetic theory, but also two of its major artists—Emerson and Thoreau.

Q. 17. William Cullen Bryant has been called by some "the Father of American Poetry." Consider his claim to this title.

Ans. William Cullen Bryant (1794-1878) dominates the poetry of the entire United States prior to the first genuine success of Longfellow and Poe, just as Irving and Cooper dominate the prose of the period. American poetry was of course beginning to show promise in Philip Freneau, but it was Bryant who gave to the poetry of the United States majestic grace and dignity and romantic charm. He was quite legitimately the first American poet to win an international reputation. This fact has won for him the title "The Father of American Poetry."

Bryant stands at the dawn of American romanticism and his poetry reflects the features of this glorious movement. Yet he is not altogether free from classicism. In fact Bryant exhibits a blending of classical and romantic qualities.

It was the poem *Thanatopsis* published in 1817 in the *North American Review* that won Bryant a reputation as a poet. When he wrote this poem he was a boy of seventeen. Later came a steady flow of verse published in the volumes *The Fountain and Othe Poems* (1842), *The White-Footed Deer and Other Poems* (1844), *Thirty Poems* (1864), *Hymns* (1864), *The Iliad of Homer* (1870), *The Odyssey of Homer* (1871-1872). A study of Bryant's poems illustrates how he was moving away from the stiff neo-classical style of his earlier verse towards the more mature romanticism of his major poetry.

Bryant's indebtedness to classicism may be seen in the unusual dignity and evenness in versification and nobility and eloquence in language. When he started his poetic career he was very much under the influence of Alexander Pope and the Augustans. The elevated tone and dignity of his poetry inspired Lowell to write about him half a century later in *A Fable for Critics* :—

> *There is Bryant, as quiet, as cool and dignified,*
> *As a smooth, silent iceberg, that never is ignified*
> *Save when by reflection, 'tis kindled o'nights*
> *With a semblance of flame by the chill Northern Lights.*

The irreverent Lowell felt that there is no genial warmth in Bryant,

> *If he stirs you at all, it is just, on my soul,*
> *Like being stirred up with the very North pole.*

he said. But this this is because Bryant liked to abide by the loftly conception of poet and poetry that he had. Like Milton, Wordsworth and Whitman, Bryant regarded the poet's calling with earnest seriousness. In the poem entitled *The Poet* he warns all aspiring poets—

Thou who wouldst wear the name
Of poet 'mid thy brethern of mankind,
And clothe in words of flame
Thoughts that shall live within the general mind !
Deem not the framing of deathless lay
The pastime of a drowsy summer day.

But readers find Bryant's poems stirring inspite of Lowell's verdict. The didacticism which is another classical feauture that he retained has not curbed the romantic spirit of the poet which soared and sang in his works.

Luckily for the world Bryant was brought up amid the hills and woods and simple unsophisticated people. He let himself be influenced by the pre-romantic English poets, Thomson, Cooper, Blair. He felt the maturing influence of the kindred spirit of Wordsworth for he read the *Lyrical Ballads*. He also emulated Byron. But Bryant was by no means an imitator. He was an original genius who was, however, susceptible to the major influences typical of his age.

Bryant's romanticism is best seen in his attitude to Nature. He shared Wordsworth's ardent love of Nature and in *A Forest Hymn* he suggests that Nature is an emanation of God, but he was no pantheist. At all times Bryant viewed Nature with a loving eye, noting alike :

.............the stream with waters of green,
As if the bright fringe of herbs on its brink
Had given their stain to the wave they drink.
('Green River')
..................the hills
Rock-ribbed and ancient as the sun, the vales
Stretching in pensive quietness between ;
The venerable woods, rivers that move
In majesty—and the complaining brooks,
That wind among the meads and made them green.
('Thanatopsis')

He loved the windflower, the violet, the brier-rose and the orchid, as well as the rougher more awe-inspiring aspects of nature, like the storm, the deep woods and the giant waves. His keen sensitive ears loved to detect the slightest of noises that went to make nature's mighty harmony—"the sound of dropping nuts", 'the cheerful tune sent up by the brooks and the joyous sound of the groves." In "June" he speaks of the long, long summer hours when from his grave he can hear "the housewife bee and the humming bird." Like Wordsworth Bryant also believed in the healing sustaining qualities that nature reveals to her chosen ones "Thanatopsis" gives eloquent expression to this belief,

To him who in the love of Nature holds
Communion with her visible forms, she speaks
A various language ; for his gayer hours
She has a voice of gladness, and a smile
And eloquence of beauty, and she glides
Into his darker musings, with a mild
And healing sympathy, that steals away
Their sharpness, ere he is aware when thoughts
Of the last bitter hour come like a blight
Over thy spirit, and sad images
Of the stern agony, and shroud and pall
And breathless darkness, and the narrow house
Make thee to shudder, and grow sick at heart,—
Go forth, under the open sky, and list
To Nature's teachings—".

Bryant is undoubtedly a moralist who finds in Nature much that inspires didactic reflections. The yellow violet and the waterfowl and the fringed gentian all preach to the poet who with Wordsworth could call Nature "the soul of all my moral being". All this was new in American poetry. It was indeed Bryant who first drew his countrymen's attention to the infinite riches, the spaciousness and grand qualities of American scenery.

Nature inspired in Bryant also deep melancholy, which again is characteristic of the romantics. 'Thanatopsis' bears witness to the poet's strong kinship with the graveyard school. His gloomy preoccupation with death and decay appears in a milder form in the charming poem "The Death of the Flowers" where he exclaims :—

Where are the flowers, the fair young flowers
That lately sprang and stood
In brighter light and softer airs, a beauteous sisterhood.

Like Freneau, Irving, and Cooper, Bryant took a romantic interest in the vanishing Indian. This interest appears in poems like *An Indian at the Burial Place of his Fathers, Monument Mountain, The Indian Girl's Lament* and *The Prairie.* His poem, *The Lone Traveller* reveals his interest also in Gothic stories.

Bryant's claim to greatness lies also in the fact that he was the first national poet. His poem, *O Mother of a Mighty Race* made the hearts of his countrymen throb in unison. He prophesied for his country a great future :

O fair young mother ! on thy brow
Shall sit a nobler grace than now
Deep in the brightness of the skies
The thronging years in glory rise,
And, as they fleet,
Drop strength and riches at thy feet.

Again in *the Death of Lincoln* Bryant speaks for his nation :

In sorrow by thy bier we stand,
Amid the awe that hushes all,
And speak the anguish of a land
That shook with horror at thy fall.

For the first time, thus, in Bryant we hear the voice of a single great nation standing at the threshold of greatness.

In versification also Bryant shows great skill and mastery. "In strong contrast to neo-classical poetry, Bryant's is marked by unusually flexible metrical patterns, such as the frequent substitution of other metrical units in the basic iambic pattern of the blank verse and by simple, direct diction. Bryant avoided structural complications by using simple quatrains, blank verse, or unspecialized couplets. Although his is not sparkling verse, but rather, reflective and restrained, there is a refreshing absence of artificiality and of unleashed emotion. Without resorting to elaborate figures of speech Bryant is surprisingly effective in developing sense images that convey precisely his close observation of Nature. It is true that his gentility, his restraint and didacticism, is somewhat foreign to the modern temper, but it is well to remember that Walt Whitman, one of the most modern and unconventional of nineteenth century poets, considered Bryant "the first-ranking American poet, thus rating him even above Emerson."

Apart from the blank verse which was Bryant's most effective medium, he has shown a surprising range of experimentation in verse forms. He knew how to bring about a harmony between the theme and the style of his poems. In *The Death of the Flowers* the combination of verse movement and sound effects is finely suited to the tone of the poem which is suggested by the very opening lines :—

The melancholy days are come,
the saddest of the year,
of wailing winds and naked woods,
and meadows brown and sere.

The technical beauty of *To a Waterfowl* has been much admired.

The clarity of the central image, and the aptness and simplicity of the moral analogy the gliding effect of the stanza. so appropriate to the visual image, have all made Matthew Arnold consid r it "the finest short poem" in the English language.

Like Spenser, 'the poets' poet' Bryant exerted a direct and strong influence over younger writers of America Such early blank verse poems as Longfellow's *The Past and Coming Year* attest his influence. Greater was the effect of his mastery of a wide range of material forms and the uniformly high level of his technique upon American poets. Though a romantic he showed how perfection of form was as important as inspired ideas As a literary critic too Bryant made invaluable contribution to American literature. His literary theories are expressed in early essay *On the Use of Trisyllabic Feet in Iambic Verse* (1811) his review *Early American Verse*, his four *Lectures on Poetry* and editorial utterances in the *United States Literary Gazette* and his collections, *Selection from the American Poets* (1840) and *A Library of Poetry and Song* (1870) His criticism is based on the romantic theory To him originality was far more important than imitation He stressed the importance of emotion and imagination, "the restless faculty...which is ever wandering from the combination of ideas directly presented to it to other combinations of its own". "There is no question that one powerful office of poetry is to excite the emotions......another of its ends is to touch the heart.......The most beautiful poetry is that which takes the strongest hold of the feelings."

Bryant has been called by several names, American Wordsworth, a belated representative of New England Puritanism, a cold child of the eighteenth century, only slightly by the warming influences of the Romantic movement. There is some truth in each of these. But he was on the whole neither the child of his own age nor the belated representative of a by-gone generation. "He was rather aloof and eclectic spirit who, with no great increase of natural endowment might have ranked as a reflective poet almost as high as Wordsworth himself."

We get a proper sense of Bryant's greatness as a poet when we recall what Emerson has said of him : "He is our native, sincere, original, patriotic poet.........He is original because he is sincere—a true painter of the face of the country and of the sentiments of his own people."

Q. 18. "A stately moralist in verse."- Do you consider this definition of William Cullen Bryant adequate ?

Ans. The Puritan movement expired in the eighteenth century but the spirit of puritanism did not of course become extinct. The

deap moral fervour and the eagerness to preach that the puritan always felt found expression in the works of many writers. William Cullen Bryant was a poet in whom the puritan streak was latent.

In the literary criticism, Bryant has shown his leaning towards didacticism. Even when he stresses the importance of emotion and imagination he feels like his fellow New Englanders and the English Victorians that poetry should have a humanizing moral purpose "It is the dominion of poetry over the feelings and passions of men that gives it its most important bearing upon the virtue and the welfare of society......Does it not glory in sentiments of fortitude and magnanimity, the fountain of disinterested sacrifice ?"

In his practice of poetry, this didacticism appears. Most of his poems end on a note of moralising In *Thanatopsis* the reflections of the poet on death conclude with the stately and sublime lesson :

So live that, when thy summons come to join
The innumerable caravan which moves
To that mysterious realm where each shall take
His chamber in the silent halls of death,
Thou go not, like the quarry-slave at night,
Sourged to his dungeon, but, sustained and soothed
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.

An ardent lover of Nature, Bryant imbibed moral teachings from every little thing. Nature was to him a great moral agent. The humble flower, the yellow violet induces in him the reflection,

So they who climb to wealth forget
The friends in darker fortunes tried.
I copied them—but I regret
That I should ape the ways af pride.

In *To the Fringed Gentian* we find that the plant with its blue flowers bring to the poet's mind the thought :

I would that thus when I shall see
The hour of death draw near to me
Hope blossoming within my heart
May look to heaven as I depart.

Every aspect of nature spoke to the poet about the Power whose care teaches the waterfowl "along that pathless coast—The desert and illimitable air—Lone wandering, but not lost". The poem *To the Waterfowl* which may be compared to Gerard Manley Hopkins's *Windhover*, is a superb poem where the moral ana-

logy is beautifully woven into the central image. The poet watches the course of the bird along the vast expanse af the sky. Long after the abyss of heaven has swallowed up its form, Bryant like Wordsworth retains a deep impression of this joy-giving, edifying spectacle. He says

....on my heart
Deeply hath sunk the lesson thou hast given
And shall not soon depart.

The next stanza makes clear what the lesson is

He who from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight
In the long way that I must tread a one
Will lead my steps aright.

A Forest Hymn declares that the groves were God's first temples. This poem is remarkable for its simplicity, sincerity and its quiet love of the revelation of God in external nature :

My heart is awed vithin me when I think
Of the great miracle that still goes on,
In silence, round me—the perpetual work
Of thy creation, finished yet renewed
Power written on thy works I read,
The lesson of thy own eternity.

Bryant's moralising consis s in holding before his readers thoughts that inspire nobility, faith, hope and trust in the Almighty. Moving in almost parable-like fashion his poems depict Nature as off.ring escape from care, innocence to rival man's depravity and beauty where men have forgotten it. Nowhere does he introduce t achings that have anything Christian about them. Even in *Thanatopsis* Bryant's concept of man's long sleep is moie stoic than Christian, with no hint of resurrections or immorality of the soul. His didacticism therefore is the didacticism of the Classicists.

But Bryant's moral fervour did not make him blind to the infinite beauties around him. Genuine romantic that he was, his sensitive soul throbbed in response to the myriad delightful souds and sight of nature. The moralist was only one aspect of Bryant. He was a great romantic poet whose soul like that of Wordsworth was attuned to the harmony of nature. His poems are undeniably beautiful and dignified.

The moral earnestness of Bryant has among other things made him a poet of the nation; for all Americans, as a result of their puritan inheritance felt this deep-rooted preoccupation with moral issues. "A stately moralist in verse" is a formula which does not altogether suffice to describe Bryant, but does not fall short of adequacy. He could be idyll c, patriotic, sentimental, even

romantic in this or that occasional poem, but in the main he was from youth to age a moralizer in blank verse—both morals and verse being always sure to gain one's respect and sometimes worthy to hold one's admiration."[1]

Q. 19. Show how Washington Irving bears kinship with both classical and romantic period. Also assess him as a story-writer.

Or

Write an appreciation of Washington Irving as a story-teller.

Ans. Appearing on the lirerary horizon of America at the turn of the nineteenth century, a satirist and a famous story-writer, Washington Irving (1783-18 9), reveals himself as an inheritor of the literary qualities of both the classical and the romantic periods. Though a trained lawyer, he turned to literature and contributed numerous collections of short-stories and biographies * He also wrote satires and documentary works. His biographies of Goldsmith, Washington, and Columbus are still famous. His most famous stories are Bracebridge Hall and Rip Van Winkle and Tales of Traveller.

Irving started writing as a neo-classical writer but then in his later career he was drawn towards romanticism. In style he is remarkably classical. He parodies or imitates Homer, Cervantes, Malory, Fielding, Sterne, and many other classical writers. He had the same concern for the form of his work as the classicists had. He preferred a polished idiom and stressed on accuracy. But in his love for Nature, in richness of imagination, in reverence of the remote and the ancient, and his love for the Supernatural he is a Romantic writer. *The Devil and Tom Walker* is a story that deals with the supernatural.

Yet Irving remains an original and individual writer. A warm sympathy, a glowing geniality, a peculiar brand of humour and an overwhelming charm are the qualities that Irving could not have borrowed from anywhere but the depth of his own impart. A

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1. *Great Writers of America*: W. P. Trent. John Erskine.

* Washington Irving's major works are the following :—

Jonathan Oldstyle. Salmagundi, Kinickerbocker's History of New York (1809), *Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon* (1819), *Bracebridge Hall* (1822), *Tales of Traveller* (1824).

He also wrote a number of biographies and documentary works notably *A. History of Life and Voyages of Colombus* (1828), *A Chronicle of the Conquest of Grandada* (1829), *Voyages and Discoveries of the Companions of Columbus* (1831). His other works include biographies of Oliver Goldsmith and Washington.

feeling for local customs, good humoured acceptance of eccentricities in human beings and divergent ways of looking at the world, a persistent refusal to take either himself or society too seriously, and a delicate balance between conformity and independence are the qualities that may be called his own.

In fact Irving was "the first man of letters from the United States to win an international reputation" (MARCUS CUNLIFF). His books are read with interest and pleasure even today. He is the earliest American writer who is still read to a considerable extent, and with adequate aesthetic pleasure. He has also been called 'the father of the modern short story' in America.

Irving had the first and the most important requisite of a teller of tales. He loved his fellow human beings and was interested in watching them and reproducing their manners and character in words. In his Introduction to *Bracebridge Hall*, Irving writes : "My only aim is to paint characters and manners." He was a great observer of life in all its infinite variety. With an eye for details, especially for the odd or whimsical Washington Irving looked at life and people and his great delight in such observations is recorded in his numerous journals. These journals themselves with their emphasis on colour, shape, physical details of things described earn for him the title of a painter in words. J. F. MC DERMOTT writes about his art : "A master craftsman, the ultimate achievement of Irving is not in the tone and rhythm of his lines, nor is it in his urbanity, his geniality, his wit, noteworthy and pleasing as these are. It comes from his skill in making pictures—pictures that win perennial response because he is dispassionate observer, the spectator who is in the thick of life and yet maintains his detachment from the subject under his observation, who is sharply interested but not personally moved. The key to his enduring success is his skill as a genre artist who paints life as it is, not as it ought to be ; who watches people in their typical and ordinary activities and makes these men, these scenes pulse with life, who from appearance creates essence."*

The cool detachment with which Irving viewed people made him refrain from moralizing. Didacticism in its obvious shape is wanting in Irving's tales, though the pleasing satire with which he has filled his works may provide edification for those who are sensitive enough to receive it. But those who insist on being informed by any literary work are apt to be disappointed when they read the stories of Irving. Irving himself pokes delicious fun at those lovers of moralizing for whom a story is incomplete without the moral tag.

Those who insist on originality of plot in a short story may also criticise Irving. His "Rip Van Winkle" and its companion

* F Mc Dermott, *The World of Washington Irving.*

piece "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" both derive their plot from German folk tales. But if Irving has borrowed these from Germany, he has so perfectly woven the stories into the texture of American life and scenery that they have become American classics. An unflinching charm, an animating suspense, an undying curiosity, a life-like setting, with a painter's skill, and his living characters are some of the qualities which make his stories remarkably palatable for children.

His stories are rich in local colour. There is a definiteness of locality that leads verisimilitude even to the most improbable of his stories. Vivid descriptive sketches recreate for us the scene and the atmosphere with telling effect. "Rip Van Winkle", "The Stout Gentleman," and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" illustrate best Irving's descriptive powers.

These and the other stories like "The Spectre Bridegroom," "The Devil and Tom Walker," "Adventures of the German Student" show how Irving was getting more and more under the spell of romanticism. His stories show the interest in the remote, both in time and space and also in the flavour of the supernatural. The 'Gothic-stories' that the romantics, especially Poe dearly loved are made use of by Irving also. But in his stories the supernatural is used with restraint and often the story ends (as in the case of *Adventure of the German Student*) in a wink to the reader, which shows Irving's general attitude to the subject matter. The German Student we are told went mad after his gruesome experience with the corpse of a young woman.

One of the reasons for the great appeal of Irving's stories is his unique sense of humour. Satire abounds in his work and often in his stories the satire is directed against the shrewish wife. Rip's wife is one such, and so is Tom Walker's wife. Tom Walker, we are told "had lived so long with a tremagant wife that he did not ever fear the devil." Rip Van Winkle is described thus : "he was a simple good-natured man ; he was moreover a kind neighbour and an obedient hen-pecked husbahd. Indeed, to the later circumstance might be owing that meekness of spirit which gained him such universal popularity ; for those men are most apt to be obsequious and conciliating abroad, who are under the discipline of shorews at home. Their tempers, doubtless, are rendered pliant and malleable in the fiery furnace of domestic tribulations, and a curtain lecture is worth all the sermons in the world for t aching the virtues of patience and long-suffering. A termagant wife, may, therefore, in some respects, be considered a tolerable blessing ; and if so Rip Van Winkle was thrice blessed." Irving's satire is turned against others thing too, and sometimes goes deep as in this account of Tom Walker : "he was bad enough in all conscience : but the devil himself could not tempt him to turn slave-trader." Again in the same story we get a dig at historians when he writes

about the disappearance of Tom's wife : "it was one of those facts which have become confounded by a variety of historians."

Irving has a charming way of taking the reader into his confidence. Like Charles Lamb the beloved English essayist, Irving keeps telling the reader something about himself. In the *Legend of Sleepy Hollow* he tells us with the utmost candour, "I profess not to know how women's hearts are wooed and won. To me they have always been matters of riddle and admiration. Some seem to have but one vulnerable point or door of access ; while others have a thousand avenues, and may be captured in a thousand different ways."

Irving's style is also a great factor that accounts for his popularity as a story-teller. The esay rhythm of the sentences, and the mild occasional relief of a pleasantry are delightful features of Irving's writings. There is a certain felicity and charm about his style and a versatility that present day readers appreciate as much as Irving's contemporaries did. He was gifted with a prose style remarkable for ease, naturalness and charm-qualities already well-developed in *Salmagundi,* but which matured under the influence of English and German romanticism, and of the legends of Europe. To Irving style was of paramount importance. He has criticised Wordsworth's use in poetry of "common colloquial phrases and vulgar idioms......coarse and commonplace." As for his own writings, Irving believed that their style was 'the thing.' "I wish", he said, "to write in such a manner that my productions may have more than mere interest of narrative to recommend them ......something, if I dare use the phrase, of classic merit, i e., depending upon style etc. which gives a production some chance for duration beyond the mere whim and fashion of the day" Another important and revealing piece of self criticism occurs in a latter that Irving wrote to a friend where he speaks of the short story : "For my part I consider a story merely as a frame on which to stretch my materials. It is the play of thought and sentiment and language ; the weaving in of characters, lightly yet expressively delineated ; the familiar and faithful exhibition of scenes in common life ; and the half-concealed vein of humour that is often playing through the whole—these are what I aim at, and upon which I felicitate myself in proportion as I succeed... There is a constant activity of thought and nicety of execution required in writing of the kind, more than the world appears to imagine"

We may well be grateful that Irving did recognize the direction in which his genius lay attempted several volumes of short stories, just as we are grateful that nowhere in his stories did Irving arbitrarily introduce a moral. A contemporary of Irving, Commissioner Henry L. Ellswhorth noted in his diary that Irving "desires most to ramble among the natural actions of men.—He watches every spring and looks with microscopic eye into the hidden wheels that móve men along, on the common walks of life." This quality,

coupled with his geniality, his quiet sympathy, his quaint humour, his modesty, sweetness and candour and his elegant and simple style have made him one of the most beloved of story-tellers. His intrinsic merit and the fact that he was the first in the field, and also his influence on other writers have made Poe declare that Irving was 'the most deservedly eminent among all the pioneers of American literature'

Q. 20. Assess James Fenimore Cooper's contribution to the development of American Novel.

Ans. When James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851) appeared on the scene of American Literature, the novel was already in existence. The American novel had its serious and creditable beginning in the books of Charles Brockden Brown. Brown's novels like *Wieland*, *Ormond*, *Arthur Mervyn*, *Edgar Huntley* illustrate the author's ability to write fiction of a psychological, introspective turn. But this trend that Brown gave to the early American novel seemed to be lost for a while in the development it received at the hands of James Fenimore Cooper.

Cooper's taking to literature was not the result of pre-meditation, or an urge to write. It was by sheer accident that he started novel-writing. Tradition has it, that Cooper, reading out an English novel to his wife commented that he could write a much better novel than that. His wife challenged him to make good the boast and the result was the first novel *Precaution* (1820), a novel depicting English society. It contained plenty of moral element and sentiment. But it proved to Cooper that he has two essential qualities of a novelist, a ready and fertile imagination and a facile pen. It thus changed the course of his entire life. From a quiet country gentleman, he was transformed into a writer. Between 1820 and 1826 Cooper wrote a number of novels all depicting romantic action and written in the mode of Sir Walter Scott's novels. *The Spy* appeared in 1821. Then came *The Pioneers* (1823), *The Pilot* (1824), *Lionel Lincoln* (1825) and *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826). After this Cooper lived in Europe for a while. His travels brought about the writing of such works as *The Bravo* (1831), *The Heidenmauer* (1832) and *The Headsman* (1833). Cooper seems to have abandoned fiction for a period and was interested in historical and critical works—*A Letter to His Countrymen* (1834), *Gleanings in Europe* (1837-38), *Homeward Bound* (1838) and *Home as Found* (1838), *The American Democrat* belong to this period. Many of those aroused much opposition at home and abroad, since Cooper satirised both Americans and Europeans. In 1839 Cooper wrote a fairly reliable work, *History of the Navy of the United States*: Cooper's experience in the United States Navy equipped him with the necessary information

for the writing of such an important work; but still the book aroused recrimination and bitterness.

In 1140 Cooper returned to fiction and gave to the world a number of novels such as *The Pathfinder*, *The Deerslayer* Problem novels such as *Satanstoe*, *The Chainbearer* and *The Red kins* belong to this period.

Cooper's non-fictional writings reveal him as a keen social critic endowed with a penetrating vision. He was opposed to Scott's glorification of medievalism. He tried sedulously to preach to his countrymen that they should not imitate European custom. His *The American Democrat* sought to point out the evils inherent in the democratic set up pleading for the rights and the duties of the aristocracy. Here Cooper defines a democrat thus: "He is the purest democrat who best maintains his rights, and no rights can be dearer to a man of cultivation than exemptions from unseasonable inventions on his time by the coarse-minded and ignorant." Some of the satire he wrote like *The Monkins* have soa nz Swiftian about them.

But Cooper is remembered today not as a social critic or as an author of problem novels but as the writer of some romantic-historical novels in which he has created a few immortal characters like Leather-stocking or Natty Bumppo, and Harvey Birch. The novels that have won lasting popularity may be divided as novels that deal with the wilderness and those that depict life in the sea. It has been said that in Cooper's novels, from first to last, the sea was to rival the forest, and both were objects that Cooper dearly loved.

Cooper's first novel *The Spy* represents many of his qualities as a story-teller. This "Tale of the Neutral Ground" is the result of Cooper's great patriotism. The background of this historical novel is the American War of Independence. The important characters are Harvey Birch, a peddler who as a spy does invaluable service to his country, while he is grossly misunderstood'as spying for England' and Mr. Harper is a well-drawn characterisation of the national hero George Washington, the father of the nation, and the ideal combination of classical virtues of st ength and vigour coupled with typically American virtues, humility and humanity. Frances Wharton, the heroin is the daughter of a loyalist gentleman Mr. Wharton, whose son is a captain in the British army. Frances is obviously meant by the novelist to depict the ideal of American womanhood. These characters and several others are brought into a series of critical situations during a momentous period in the history of the country The main interest of the story is provided by the two pursuits of Harvey Birch, the spy. Incidentally a great deal of light is thrown on the nobility and extraordinary humanity of Washington. Though it does not give as good a historical panorama as other historical novels, it

gives a very striking and unforgettable picture of one of the greatest personalities of America. In fact Cooper's portrait of Washington in *The Spy* is among the earliest examples of the idealisation of George Washington, "The man in the white marble toga."

The Pioneers or *The Sources of the Susquehnna* is the first of the stories in which Natty Bumppo or Leatherstocking appears. Th· novel is perhaps the first true romance of the frontier in American literature. The most striking character is the old hunter and frontiersman Natti Bumppo. He is relentlessly troubled by Hiram Doolittle, a vicious local magistrate. Ultimately inspite of the entreaties of noble and honourable men of the place like Judge Temple and Edward Oliver Effingam, friends of Natty, the old hunter walks away into the woods, a solitary figure, grand and lonely like the landscape in which he lives. This interesting character appears again in stories like *The Prairie* and in *The Last of the Mohicans*, *The Deerslayer* and *The Pathfinder*. It is on these Leatherstocking Tales that Cooper's fame rests. It is because in the figure of Leatherstocking Cooper has given the world an immortal character. In all these books, we find that the portrait has been kept consistently true. Leatherstocking is no primitive's man though he has many qualities that go to prove Rousseau's views. There is no touch of politics about him. What makes him a remarkable figure is his inherent nobility, his legitimate mistrust of a civilization that has fostered such characters as Hiram Doolittle. Leatherstocking reflects Cooper's own love of the woods. The conflict between the Indians and the white men and the consequent disappearance of the wilderness were things that touched Cooper porfoundly. Returning to Ostego, his country, after a long absence, Cooper wrote in a letter that the woods around had been a good deal 'lacerated'. This telling word explains the mood of the Leatherstocking novels. The Indians and their friend the white man, Natty Bumppo, known also as the Leatherstocking, are up against the encroachment of civilisaton fighting in vain, for the viceroy is certain to be with the whites. In *The Pioneers* Natty tells Judge Temple :"Ah! the game is becoming hatd to find, indeed judge, with your clearings and betterments". There is a world of compelled resignation implied in the words. Cooper has successfully established in these novels something like a mysterious bond between the wilderness and the hero drawn against it Natty Bumppo. The landscape keeps changing and the character aging. With unique ability Cooper has illustrated both these in the series of novels. Natty Bumppo assumes different aspects. He is Deerslayer, who then becomes Hawk-eye, then the pathfinder, then Leatherstocking, then the Trapper, but inspite of the changes, he is always the same character, simply growing old. The process of Natty's growing old is accompanied by "a parallel waste of the primitive forest, as though he were a kind of wood god, or at least in some more than poetic sense brother to the trees. In

The Deerslayer and *The Last of the Mohicans* the forest is primitive; in *The Pathfinder* it begins to be broken with the settlement; in *The Pioneers* the cutting of lumber is a cause of real pain to the old hunter; and in *The Prairie* the trees have disappeared and the tree-lover dies on the plains."1

Cooper's love of the wilderness was rivalled only by his love of the sea. It is said that he wrote his novel *The Pilot* in order to illustrate the true sailor's point of view, for he felt that Scott in his novel *The Pirate* showed ignorance of seamanship. Cooper has laid the plot of the novel just off shore, wh re the ship is in great danger In the figures of Richard Barnstable, commander of the American ship Ariel, and Long Tom Coffin, coxswain of the *Ariel* we have two remarkable 'sea-dogs' Mr. Gray, a mysterious pilot, in reality the redoubtable John Paul Jones is one of the most romantic heroes drawn by Cooper. In his mysterious comings and goings, his dramatic attitude in moments of danger, his extreme egotism, there is something of the Byronic mood. In this novel as well as in *The Spy* the influence of Scott is visible. Characters like Tom Coffin and Harvey Birch remind us of the ultra-romantic heroes of Byron and Scott who stand outside the main stream of life, doomed and lonely, yet are the most interesting persons in the story. Leatherstocking and Paul Jones too are ultra-romantic. But it would be wrong to say that Cooper drew such figures in imitation of Scott. The truth is that both Cooper and Scott found such figures on a frontier, Scott, by tradition, and Cooper with his own eyes. Unlike Scott's heroes, Cooper's ultra-romantic heroes are not very heroic after all. They are not all superman ; though they do have striking qualities.

Cooper's female characters have been criticised as ultra-romantic and even unreal. Of all the women that Cooper drew, Frances Wharton(*The Spy*) seems to embody the ideal of American womanhood. But it is Judith Hutter who remains the most intresting woman Cooper drew. She appears in *The Deerslayer* where the young Natty Bumppo is made to come face to face with her. She with her dishonourable past cannot tempt young Natty to whom purity is above all other virtues.

The style of Cooper's novels is not always quite enviable. His language is stilted and crude and full of artificiality and formality. As for his dialogue it is atrociusly stilted. Long descriptive passages also come in between the reader and his enjoyment of Cooper's stories Events sometimes move with exasperating slowness. Another defect in Cooper's novels is that situations that are incredible are arbitrarily imposed upon the readers. He sometimes introduces what has come to be called 'Deus exmachina'—a character provided just to solve the situation.

1. John Erskine, W. B. Trent.

But inspite of these defects, the fact remains that Cooper is the earliest important American novelist. His characters are so convincing in their romantic backgrounds and there is such a speed and gusto about the narrative that even today people like the novels, especially the Leatherstocking series. Cooper, though he gave realistic pictures of the dwindling frontier was motivated by a high idealism in writing his works. He believed that fiction should have great significance and elevating purpose, beyond its value as entertainment. As Professor Quinn has pointed out Cooper,s conception of art was"to write about those things which are important those scenes which are thrilling, those scenes which have in them some flavour of nobility." His picturers of the noble Indian, of the scrupulous eminently noble specimens of white man amply illustrate this view. To all those who object to the highly idealised pictures of the heroes of Cooper the novelist has this to say that this idealization is "the privilege of all writers of fiction, more particularly when their works aspire to the elevation of romances, to present the beautiful ideal of their characters to the reader " He also believed that while a strict and rigid adhesion to truth, might be an indispensable requisite in history and travel records, it destroys the charm of fiction, "for all that is necessary to be conveyed to the mind by the latter had better be done by delineation of principles and of characters in their classes, than by a too fastidious attention to originals."

Mark Twain has rather mercilessly indicated the defects of Cooper in the essay entitled *Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offences*. He points out the innumerable improbabilities, such as the fanta-astically punctual meetings between Natty Bumppo and his friend the Mohican chief, Chingachgook "pronounced Chicago I think," said Mark Twain, and the rescues delayed till the last minute But in spite of Mark Twain's criticism Cooper is still read and enjoyed the world over. He was indeed a mighty factor in the history of the American novel. His work was impressive because of its quality as well as its quantity. In the course of thirty years he wrote thirty-three novels, of all types, simple romances, tales of adventure, historical stories, satires, pictures of manners. Excepting his stories on Europe, what Cooper wrote may be called truly national. He succeeded eminently in his portrayal of local types and the characteristic scenes of many regions. He had a wonderful eye for the forest and the sea that made him, as Balzac said the master of literary landscape-painters. "Both the sea-tales and frontier romances struck some deep ancestral chord in the hearts of men. Cooper deeply understood the passion for a solitary life that went with a feeling for the vastness and freshness of the forest and that sometimes bred elevated characters steady as the pines, with head erect, at once humble and grand."[1] Naturally Cooper's vividest characters were all men who lived in close

1 *Our Literary Heritage*: Van Wyck Brooks. O. to L. Bettmann.

contact with nature, men of the humble sort, Harvey Birch, Long Tom, Natty Bumppo They were all representatives of the type that Melville called "the kingly commons", men whom Cooper loved. The appeal of Cooper's novels is thus described by Marcus Cunliffe: ' Cooper's achievement is a remarkable one. It could be argued that his view of the American wilderness is essentially that of the cultivated Europ an, as Bartram's had been, a generation previously Whether or not that is so, he did succeed in casting an enduring literary spell Very few to-day trouble to read Heckewelder, from whom Cooper drew his information, though his descriptions are no doubt more 'accurate'. It is the invented, mythological tincture that make us still read Cooper, even if we usually leave his world behind with our childhoods. And though his novels of the sea have less of this capacity for magic, they too, represent the power of Cooper to create fiction out of apparently unpromising material. If in reading him we can re-enter our childhood fantasies, the time will not be badly spent."

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Edgar Allen Poe (1809-49)

Q. 21. Do you agree with Whitman's opinion that Poe's verses belong among the electric lights of imaginative literature, brilliant ard dazzling but with no heat," that they carry "the rhyming art of excess "?

Ans. 'The poet's eye in a fine frengy rolling,' wrote Shakespeare 'doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven.' This fine frenzy is certainly accepted as an essence of gneat poetry. Edgar Allen Poe (1809-1849), the American poet exhibited this quality to a pre-eminent degree. In one of his letters he wrote of a visiting clergyman who "stood smiling and bowing at the madman Poe!" The poetry of Poe is the result of this madness and a certain lucidity that was almost mathematical.

This intresting figure in the history of American poetry has been much discussed. No other literary man of America has given rise to such a heated controversy and so wide a difference of opinion as Poe. Tennyson considered him the greatest American genius and a great poet of the nineteenth centuty ; W. B Yeats declared Poe "always and for all lands a great lyric poet." The French, from Baudelaire to Valery have regarded him with great adoration. Marcus Cunliffe points out: "More than one American involved in a literary conversation with a Frenchman, has heard the latter produce the word 'Edgarpo', as though it were both a talisman and a high compliment. In the words of Karl Shapiro, "Poe may be considered the godfathers of symbolist poetry and thus one of the modern poetry." Americans however, have viewed Poe and his works with mixed feelings Emerson called him a "jingle man", Lowell's famous veroict on Poe is that he is "three-fifths genius and two-fifth sheer fudge." Henry James remarks, "An enthusiasm for Poe is the mark of a decidedly primitive stage of reflection."

Poe was born in 1809 in Boston as the son of travelling actors. The desertion of his family by Poe's father and the death of the mother when Poe was just two,were incidents that cast their shadow over his life. Adopted by John Allen, a Richmond tobacco exporter, Poe lived with his family till he enlisted in the army. Rift with Allan made Poe depend on himself for his living He wrote stories for important journals and served as editor of *Graham's Magazine* and *Broadway Journal* His *Poems* appeared in 1831 and revealed unmistakable talent in such pieces as *To Helen Israfel* and *The City in the Sea. Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* appeared in 1840 and in 1845 *The Raven and other Poems*. In 1836 Poe married his cousin Virginia Clemm. She died in 1847 leaving in the throes of bereavement and utter loneliness. He

survived his wife by two years This was a period fiilled with poetry, intoxication, illness and degradation that made Poe write "There are moments when, even to the sober eye of Reason, the world of our sad humanity must assume the aspect of Hell."

Poe had very definite views about poetry. In the first place he believed that a poem should be short. In the poetic principle he writes, "I hold that a long poem does not exis'. I maintain that the phrase 'a long poem' is simply a flat contradiction in terms " This is because he believed that the elevating excitement which poetry induces cannot be sustained throughout a composition of any great length. All Poe's poems except the prose poem *Eureka* are written in conformiry with this rule. *Eureka* written by Poe at the end of his life, is a prose work which he insists is a poem and which he comments to posterity as his crowning achievement. It is many pages in length and handles scientific ideas in the truth of which the poet is passionately convinced, and the genereal subject is the origin and destiny of the universe. "What Poe has done in this work is something daring and original to take the oldest of the poetic theme—older even than the story of the epic hero—namely, cosmology, the story of how things came to exist as they do, and treat it in comepletely contemporary way, to do in English in the nineteenth contury what Hesiod and Lucretius had done in Greek and Latin centuries before." (W.H.Auden .

Inspite of the importance that Poe himself attached to 'Eureka' and inspite of the great appeal it has had on the French people, the fact remains that Poe's smaller poems are much more widely read and loved than this.

The Raven is easily the best-known of Poe's poems, and the one upon which his fame most securely rests. The theme of the poem is a subject that was favourite with Poe—the grief of a bereaved lover for his lost love. A clue to the understanding of this poem is provided by Poe himself in his essay *The Philosophy of Composition* where he displays to the reader the various steps by which Poe arrived at the final composition of this poem. Searching in his mind diligently for a theme at once beautiful and melancholy he arrived at the conclusion that "the death of a beautiful woman is unquestionably the most poetical topic in the world—and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover." This then is the theme of *The Raven.* A young student sits in his chamber "upon a midnight dreay" in the bleak Decembeer, trying to escape through books from the grief that weighs upon him because of the death of his beloved Lenore. He hears some-one "rapping gently, rapping at my chamber door." It is a raven that comes in and perches upon a bust of Pallas in the room. To the questions that the young man asks the bird the answer comes 'Nevermore.' To the blurred vision and heat-oppressed brain of the young lover the Raven assumes almost a

supernatural shape so that he addresses it as "prophet, thing of evil Prophet still if bird or devil !" In utter despair and an insane desire for self-torture he poses this final question to the bird :

By that Heaven that bends above us,
by that God we both adore
Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within
the distant Aidden,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden, whom
the angels name Lenore
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden
whom the angels name "Lenore"!
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore".

The soul of the young lover yields itself completely to despair that is as black as the raven himself:

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting.
still is sitting
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above
my chamber door;
And his eyes hare all the seeming of a
demon's that is dreaming,
And the lamp-light o'er him streaming
throws his shadow on the floor
And my soul from out that shadow that
lies floating on floor
Shall be lifted-nevermore !

Poe's success in handling this theme is praised by Rossetti, who admitted that his beautiful poem *The Blessed Damozel* was inspired by *The Raven* He wrote : "I saw that Poe had done the utmost it was possibble to do with the grief of the lover on earth and I determined to reverse the condition and give utterance to the yearning of the loved one in heaven "

Annabel Lee is another poem of Poe that deals with bereavement According to some this poem has been written in memory of Poe's wife Virginia The last stanza of this charming poem shows how the grief caused by the dear one may be sublimated by the recollection of true love and unforgettable beauty.

For the moon never beams without bringing me dreams
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee ;
And the stars never rise but I feel the bright eyes
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;
And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side
Of my darling my darling – my life and my bride,
In her sepulcher there by the sea,
In her tomb by the sounding sea.

The semi-dramatic poem *Lenore* has the same theme. About the

subject of this poem Poe wrote : "Her tone.. ......is not so much the tone of passion, as of a gentle and melancholy regret, interwoven with a pleasant sense of the natural loveliness surrounding the lost in the tomb, and a memory of her beauty while alive. Elegiac poems should either assume this character or dwell purely on the beauty (moral or physical) of the departed, or better still utter the note of triumph. I have endeavoured to carry out this idea in some verses which I have called *Lenore*." Hence he concludes his poems thus :

And I-tonight my heart is light-no dirge
will I upraise,
But whaft the angel on her flight with a paean
of old days!

To One in Paradise is yet another instance of Poe's obsession with the theme of death and bereavement. The feeling of desolation felt by the lover is expressed in the lucid and beautiful stanza:

And all my days are trances,
And all my dreams
Are where thy gray eye glances,
And where thy footstep glems
In what ethereal dances,
By what eternal streams.

In *Israfel*, an unusual lyric for Poe, he expresses a mood of rejoicing and exaltation caused by reflection on the angel Israfel "whose heart-strings are a lute, and who has the sweetest voice of all God's creatures." At the end of the poem the poet laments his own limitations, his own inability to sing as compelling melodies as Israfel :

If I could dwell
Where Israfel
Hath dwelt, and he where, I,
He might not sing so wildly well
A mortal melody,
While a bolder note than this might swell
From my lyre within the sky.

This final stanza that voices the despair concerning a poet's hampering environment reminds us of Shelley's passionate outburst at the close of his *Ode to the Nightingale.*

Ulalume remains one of the poems which have bereavement as their themes. This poem has much in common with the raven. It is however indefinite, but it is only because Poe believed indefiniteness or the giving of pleasure and beauty to the essentials of poetry. He knew that the poem was indefinite but did not want to explain it. He wrote to a friend "I would endeavour to explain to you what I realy meant—or what I fancied I meant by the poem, if it were not that I remembered Dr. Johnson's bitter and rather just

remark about the folly of explaining what, if worth explanation, would explain itself" The poem aims at pointing out the dangers of a purely physical or sensuous love and also the need for sublimating the love.

To Helen has contributed two lines that are among the most frequently-quoted lines of poetry,

> *The Glory that was Greece*
> *And the grandeur was Rome.*

The poem was inspired by a woman whom Poe knew when he was a boy. He called her "the first pure ideal love of my soul" The poem is superb because of its fusion of theme and form. The unity of the poem is the result of this synthesis of feeling and expression. The imagery of the poem makes the heroine a heaven for "weary wayworn wanderer." The last stanza makes it evident that Poe attributes to his 'Helen' not merely physical beauty but spiritual beauty as well,

> *Lo! in you brilliant window-nichs*
> *How statue-like I see the stand,*
> *The agate lamp within thy hand!*
> *Ah, Psyche, from the regions which*
> *Are Holy Land!*

Poe's complete mastery over the language is illustrated in the familiar poem *The Bells.* The four different stanzas recapture with striking effect the sound of four diflerent types of bells—silver bells, golden bells, brazen bells and iron bells. It has been rightly praised as one of the finest examples of onomatopoeia in the language. Professor Harrison calls it "the most perfect imitation in word, sound and rhythm, in suggestion, in exquisite mimicry of its theme ever written."

Poe's ability to wield the literary form the Sonnet, is illustrated in *Sonnet – to Science* The theme of this charming poem echoes John Keats's question in *Lamia* "Do not all charms fly at the merest touch of cold philosophy ?" The poet Poe accuses Science 'True daughter of old time' of curbing imaginative flights and killing poetry. The thought finds happy expression in the beautiful lines :

> *Hast thou not dragged Diana from her car ?*
> *And driven the Hamadrayed from the wood*
> *To seek a shelter in some happier star ?*
> *Hast thou not torn the Naiad from her flood.*
> *The Elfin from the green grass, and from me*
> *The summer dream beneath the tormented tree ?*

The City in the Sea The Sleeper Al Aaraat, are other poems of Poe which give to the reader that excitement which he maintained is the task of all good poetry.

In Poe's essay The Poetic Principle he has stated that poetry should concern itself with beauty, not primarily with the beauty of particular things but rather with 'supernatural beauty'. In creating this effect. Poe held that rhythm is of paramount significance. He difined poetry as the 'rhythemical creation of Beauty'. Poe was particular to give his poems the proper musical cadence to suit their themes. He found retrain and alliteration to be of special relevance in a poem like The Raven. W. H. Auden in his introduction to the Selected Prose and Poetry of Poe points out the Poe could have grown to greater stature as a poet but for the difficulty that "he was interested in too many poetic problems and experiments at once for the time he had to give to them." Had he the time and the suitable environment to write and rewrite his poems he could have been definitely a greater poet. This significant tact is avowed by Poe himself in preface to his poems : "In defence of my own taste, it is incumbent upon me to say that I think nothing in this volume of much value to the public, or very creditable to myself. Events not to be controlled have prevented me from making, at any time, any serious effort in that, under happier circumstances would have been the field of my choice." Auden points out that in the poem The Raven for example, the glaring defect is that the thematic interest and the prosodic interest–both of which are considerable, do not combine and are even of en at odds.

Poe's poems indeed are the results of his fantasy and they take the readers on flights of fancy and give them great aesthetic delight. In this sense what Whitman has said about Poe is indeed true. His poems are brilliant and dazzling. But these poems which create in us a certain mood do not give us any vital lesson or deep philosophy. Their effect is not profound. But because of their preoccupation with some melancholy theme and with their grasp on beauty their appeal is undeniable. Poe's interest in prosody was indeed deep. He was extremely efficient in the use of internal and external rhyme, regular rhythm and words carefully chosen and arranged for their sound effect, and onomatopoia. At times his material effects may seem crude and his rhymes faulty. W. H. Auden points out how in The Raven Poe chose the wrong metre–one with frequent feminine themes, so rare in English and which spoils the effect of his poem. Even the Ulalume is criticised thus : "Ulalume is an interesting experiment in diction but only an experiment, for the poem is about something which never quiet gets said because the sense is sacrificed to the vowel sounds". But all readers of this poem do not feel this way. To many the part played by sound effect in the poem is a happy one. "The insistent almost hypnotic repetitive patterns. which underlie the entire poem strongly reinforce the humbing. over-powering emotion of grief. The low-pitched sonorous diction contributes significantly to the melancholy tone and the dreariness of the landscape." Peo's careful choice of words

for their connotations and his mastery of rhythm and tone colour were factors that enriched his memorable lyrics. Some of his poems no doubt, are too showy in technique or too deliberately blurred in meaning to satisfy modern taste, but the poems *To Helen, Israfel, To One in Paradise* remain masterpieces in the English language. Poe's poetic work though small in quantity is certainly disinct. His poems are not to be read intellectually, but for sound and suggestion. They give lyrical intensity and magic of expression. In a didactic era Poe regarded poetry as the rhythmical creation of beauty—goodness and truth being sharply subordinated The result is that he has given the world poems, which whatever may be said against them remain things of beauty.

Points to Remember

1. Edgar Allen Poe (1809—49) is the Shelley of America. His poetry also is like the beating of a luminous angel in the void in vain. His verses belong to the "electric lights of imaginative literature, brilliant and dazzling but with no heat." He has been called "the madman".

2. But his admirers praise him. Tennyson considered him the greatest American genius and a great poet of the nineteenth century. W. B. Yeats declared him "always and for all lands a great lyric poet." French scholars such as Baudelaire and Valery also praised him, so did Cunliffe. Karl Shapir called him the godfather of symbolist poetry and the godfather of modern poetry. In the words of Lowel, he is "three-fifths genius and two-fifth sheer fudge."

3. His famous poems are *To Helen, Israfel, The City in the Sea, The Raven and Other Poems, Eureka, Annabel Lee, Lenore, The Bells, Sonnet to Science, To One in Paradise*, etc.

4. His poems are short and lyrical, full of excitement and lyricism ; he is the poet of love and lovers, of death and bereavement.

5. *The Bells* shows his mastery of language. It is a good example of onomatopoeia. Harrison calls it "the most perfect imitation in word, sound and rhythm, in suggestion, in exquisite mimicry, of its theme ever written."

6. Poe has also written sonnets.

7. His primary concern is with beauty—both earthly and ethereal beauty. His poems are the results of his fantasy and they take the readers on flights of fancy.

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Q. 22 "Edgar Allen Poe did not create the short story..... but he did compact it, give it standards of structure for America and rid it of the sentimental and meditative elements then common in tales"—Discuss.

Ans. When Edgar Allen Poe appeared on the literary scene the Puritan prejudice against fiction had disappeared. The atmosphere was congenial to the writing of stories and novels. Charles Brockden Brown and others had written novels, and the many great periodicals that catered to the reading public encouraged the writing of short stories. Washington Irving had shown great genius in fusing European legends and American landscape and way of living, in his delightful stories. So Edgar Allen Poe (1809-1849) cannot be said to have started the literary form of the short story. But to the writing of short story he brought qualities which were distinctly his own.

What a story meant to Poe is shown in his review of Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales*. He considered the short story as a great literary form "The tale proper", he writes, "in our opinion affords unquestionably the fairest field for the exercise of the loftiest talent which can be afforded by the wide domains of mere prose." He stipulates that a story must be short enough to be read at one sitting, so as to gain "the immense force derivable from totality." He emphasises the idea that the story should aim at a single and unique effect, all details being excluded which do not further the "one pre-established design"

Several divisions of Poe's stories have been suggested. There are the tales of ratiocination or the analytical stories such as *The Gold Bug* or *Murders in the Rue Morgue*, the tales of mystery and occultism or horror and death as *Ligeia* and *The Fall of the House of Usher*, pseudo scientific tales or tales of marvellous adventure like, *Mr. Found in a Bottle* or *The Descent into the Maelstorm*. There are also tales of fantasy and extravagance such as *Eleanora* or *The Domain of Arnheim* and stories which are humorous such as *The Devil in the Belfry*.

Poe has established himself as an expert in the field of stories of ratiocination That he considered this type of stories as very important is revealed by his review of Hawthorne's Tales where he says, "some of the finest tales are tales of ratiocination." *The Gold Bug*, *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* and *The Purloined Letter* are the best examples of Poe's detective stories. They illustrate Poe's absorbing interest in man's reason, and in the rational process of thought. These stories also illustrate a certain type of Poe's hero who seems to be all disembodied intellect, interested not in ideas but in the detection of fact. Dupin is this type of hero. He is so well-delineated that severel other writers were immediately drawn to the tradition established by Poe, of the master mind who solves mysteries. Along with this we notice

something equally interesting—the presence of a colourless, insignificant, almost impersonal confidant or narrator who serves as a kind of foil to the master mind. Sir Arther Conan Doyle's indebtedness to Poe in the creation of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson is only too obvious. Several others of detective stories certainly had their lessons from Poe.

Though in his poems Poe professed to care very little for it he had a genuine interest in science as is evident from his scientific or pseudo-scientific narratives of marvellous adventure In writing his Gothic stories Poe followed his idea that the most soul stirring effect could be achieved by blurred rather than precise details. In stories like *A Descent into the Maelstorm* Poe has adhered to the minutest detail. In this particular scene where Poe narrates the story of a fisherman's miraculous escape from the maelstorm, the description of the scene is so vivid and authentic that it is impossible to believe that Poe had never been in the region he describes, and that he was relying entirely on his vigorous imagination. *A Descent into the Maelstorm* and *Gordon Pym* are two of the finest adventure stories written in the language.

Poe's great contribution to the development of the American story may be summed up as artistic, rational, a set of formulated principles and a complete break from the "heresy of the didactic " He was the first among American writers to formalize the technique of the short story, seeking totality of effect through compression, immediacy, verisimilitude and finality. He recognized the short story as a superb art form, the aim of which was to create a total effect Even the themes that he brought to fiction were widely copied. It was Poe who invented the story of detection. Hence he is the ancestor of Sherlock Holmes and his many successors, while H. G. Wells and Jules Verne owe much to Poe's tales of the future and his adventure stories respectively. Poe was the first also to develop a new fiction of psychological analysis and his portraits of abnormal or self-destructive states contributed much to greater masters like Dosteovski. Poe's stories therefore are a landmark in the development of American fiction.

Edgar Allen Poe was the first American to express the aesthetic tradition in art. Furiously objecting to the didactic element in art, Poe defined poetry as "the rhythmical creation of Beauty." In *The Poetic Principle* he lashes his whip at the heresy which has accomplished more in the corruption of our poetical culture than all its other enemies combined. . "The Poetic Principle", he explained himself, "is all due to the heresy of Didactic." Poe accuses his countrymen of being especially addicted to this notion that every poem should inculcate a moral. To Poe poetry is the resulting of that reaching out for the Beauty above. "The struggle to apprehend the supernal loveliness—this struggle, on the part of sound fittingly constituted—has given to the world all that

which it (the world) has ever been enabled at once to understand and to feel as poetic " Again he writes: "and the most intense pleasure is derived, I maintain, from the contemplation of the Beautiful. In the contemplation of Beauty alone we find it possible to attain that pleasurable elevation or excitement of the soul, which we recognize as the poetic sentiment, and which is so easily distinguished from Truth, which is the satisfaction of Reason, or from Passion, which is the excitement of the heart. I make Beauty, therefore— using the word as inclusive of the sublime—I make Beauty as the province of the poem."

Poe offers a striking contrast to the romantic critics of the day. For, while they popularised a concept of the artist as responding intuitively to inspiration, Poe emphasised the rational in art and insisted upon "the application of a rigorous method" in literary composition. Both in the poem and the short story Poe advocated a deliberate striving to subordinate all minor details to the total effect or design. What he has said in his Review of Twice-told Tales is quoted whenever there is a discussion of the short story. "A skilful literary artist has constructed a tale. If wise, he has not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents : but having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or single effect to be wrought out, he then invents—he then combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this pre-conceived effect."

Poe believed that the tale should have unity of effect and that everything else should be subordinated to this unity. *The Fall of the House of Usher* considered by many as Poe's best story is a superb example of Poe's theory and craftsmanship, as it is tightly structured, concentrated and possessing unity of eflect, design and atmosphere. The very opening of the story establishes an atmosphere of desolation and disintegration. The oppressive autumn day and the decaying, ancient family mansion are both symbolic of the terrible doom that awaits the hero Roderick Usher, the neuropath of impotent will. The tempestuous elements of nature, the solemn movement of the prose, rising to a crescendo at the end and all the strands of the story converging to the "single effect," produce the grim phantasm, fear, which dominates the story. The strange appearance of the house, the weird actions of the mad inhabitant of the house, Usher, the strange burial and return to life of Madeline, the death of Usher and the destruction of the house are incidents that contribute to the effect of horror. But there are other and more subtle factors that build up an atmosphere of horror. One such factor is "a series of increasingly weird identifications : identification. for instance between the house and its inmates,between Usher and his sister, between works of art and actual happenings and finally between the madness of Usher and the momentary madness of the narrator."

According to Poe's own judgement 'Ligeia' was his best story.

Here Poe has based his story on the theory of 'metempsychosis' or the transmigration of souls. Ligeia comes back several years after death to her husband by taking possession of the dead body of his second wife, animating it and changing its appearance to that of her own. Here Poe was faced with the problem of unifying a narrative which tended to break into two disintegrated parts—one describing the life and death of the heroine Ligeia and the other telling of her return years latter to life. But with enviable skill Poe has got over this hurdle. From the first Ligeia is portrayed in such a way as to prepare us for her conquest of death. Also we get constant references to the belief in transmigration of souls. Above all Poe has made use of a succession of highly suggestive images and words that prepare us for Ligeia's strange return to life from the land of the dead.

The Masque of the Red Death is from the stylistic point of view considered by many ciritics as Poe's finest work. Here also the atmosphere is of great significance. The description of the several apartments with their weird colour schemes provides the ideal atmosphere for the appearance of the figure of the Red Death. Colour scheme, in fact is the most important design in the story and the theme to be proved is stated in the early description of the pestilence : "Blood was its avatar and its seal—the redness and the horror of blood." Many of Poe's stories are set in strange places—a ruined abbey, a castle on the Rhine—with elaborate and dimly or luridly lit decors. Often events happen at night or in unlit interiors. In Poe's stories dealing with the macabre we find a great deal of intelligent and systematic planning of detail In this respect his horror stories and 'tales of effect' were different from similar stories that appeared in popular journals like *Blackwood's Magazine*. About such a story Poe wrote in his article, *How to Write a Blackwood Article* : "There was the 'Dead Alive' a capital thing !—the record of a gentleman's sensations when entombed befor the breath was out of his body – full of taste, terror, sentiment, metaphysics and erudition. You would have sworn that the writer had been born and brought up in a coffin." Poe therefore was careful to bring in a mathematical logic even in the grotesque stories that he wrote. His stories as Baudelaire said show "absurdity installing itself in the intellect, and governing it with a crushing logic." As Marcus Cunliffe points out, "Though the ghastliness is occasionally overdone, it is made all the more night-marish by the measure deliberation with which it is unfolded." In spite of this deliberation and their appeal to the intellect, Poe's stories are strong in emotional appeal as well Each story begins by appealing to the mind, yet it ends by taking hold of the soul.

Points to Remember

ce as a Story-writer

1. Poe appeared on the lieterary scene when the Puritan prejudice against fiction had disappeared.

2. He regarded short-story writing as the fairest field for the exercise of the loftiest talent in prose.

3. His famous stories include "The Gold Bag", "Ligeia", "The Fall of the House of Usher", "Mr. Found in a Bottle", "The D scent into the Maelstorm", "Eleanora", "The Domain of Arntheim", "The Devil in the Belfry". "The Gold Bug", "The Murders in the Rue Morgue", and "The Purloined Letter."

4. Poe has a genuine interest in science, and has written science narratives and adventurous tales. He adheres to the minutest details.

5. His greatest contribution as a short-story writer lies in freeing the story from the "heresy of the didactic". He favoured art for the sake of art. H. G. Wells and Jules Verne owe much to his tales.

6. Poe was the first also to develop a new fiction of psychological analysis and his portraits of abnormal or self-destructive states contributed much to greater masters like Dosteovski.

7. Poe was the first American to express the aesthetic tradition in art.

8. According to Poe, "Ligeia" was his best story. "The Masque of the Red Death" is the best story from the stylistic point of view.

Q. 23 "America's first major literary critic"—Do you think Edgar Allen Poe deserves this title ?

Ans. The best literary criticism in English has always come from the poets. To be convinced of the truth of this statement one has only to take a glance at such an illustrious gallaxy of critics as Philip Sidney, Dryden, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Matthew Arnold and T. S. Eliot. In America though literary criticism was practised by many before his time, it was Edgar Allen Poe who raised it to great status by bringing to it unusual preceptiveness and a definite set of standards.

Poe's criticism appeared in the periodicals in which he reviewed the works of contemporary writers. As a reviewer he was quite vigorous and seems to have spared none of the writers of his time. Poe's aim as a critic was to save American literature from what according to him was narrow provincialism, didacticism and indifference to artistic craftsmanship. He felt that contemporary romantic critics erred on the side of generosity and showed excessive appreciative sympathy. Poe on the other hand was often loud in his disapproval. He was at times shrill and vindictive and

he allowed himself to be too closely involved in the literary squabbles around him. But Poe's greatness as a critic lay in the fact that "he took criticism seriously, pitching it on an ambitiously high level. Even if he is not always consistent he provides theories for all that he has tried to write, theory that may serve others." *The Poetic Principle, The Philosophy of Composition* and his *Review of Hawthorne's Twice-Told Tales* give in unequivocal terms Poe's ideas on poetry as well as on prose tales. In the *Poetic Principle* Poe writes : "I hold that a long poem does not exist. I maintain that the phrase 'a long poem' is simply a flat contradiction in terms." He explains himself by dwelling on the meaning and function of poetry. A poem deserves its title only in as much as it excites by elevating the soul. "The value of the poem is in the ratio of this elevating excitement. But all excitements are through a physical necessity, transient." Hence a poem has to be short, if it is long it certainly fails to keep the excitement sustained. This argument makes Poe declare that "Paradise Lost" is to be viewed merely as a 'series of minor poems'. Along with brevity a poem should have another essential quality– unity. Poe calls unity the vital requisite in all works of art.' This totality of effect or impression he found of necessity lacking in epic poetry. *Paradise Lost* and Homer's epics are therefore frowned upon by Poe. "In regard to the *Illiad* we have, if not positive proof, at least very good reason, for believing it intended as a series of lyrics; but, granting the epic intention, I can say only that the work is based on imperfect sense of Art" Poe maintains that the epic is sure to become extinct as 'the days of these artistic anomalies are over.' "If at any time, any very long poem were popular in reality, which I doubt, it is at least clear that no very long poem will ever be popular again." If the epic is 'the offspring of an imperfect sense of Art,' the too short poem is not the child of good artistic sense either. 'A *very* short poem, while now and then producing a brilliant or vivid, never produces a profound or enduring effect. There must be a steady pressing down of the stamp upon the wax.' (*Poetic Principle*). These views of poetry are reiterated in Poe's *Review of Hawthorne's Twice-Told Tales*. Here after talking of poetry, Poe passes on to raise objections to the long novel on the same artistic ground. "Were we called upon to desingnate that class of composition, which next to such a poem as we have suggested, should best fulfil the demands of high genius,... ....we should unhesitatingly speak of the prose tales as Mr. Hawthorne has here exemplified it. We allude to the short prose narrative, requiring from a half-hour to one or two hours in its perusal. The ordinary novel is objectionable, from its length, for reasons alretady in substance. As it cannot be read at one sitting, it deprives itself, of course, of the immense force derivable from *totality* .... In the brief tale, however, the author is enabled to carry out the fulness of his intention, be it what it may." If his very initial sentence tend not to the

ringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step. In the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design. In his emphasis upon rationality, unity and form Poe anticipates the analytical approach that is characteristic of the modern critical method.

"The Philosophy of Composition" illustrates Poe's idea that a poem is to be built step by step with deliberate and intelligent striving for the total effect. He has no sympathy with those poets who want the world to think that "they compose by a species of fine frenzy, an ecstatic intuition," and who dare not let the public have a glimpse of the "vacillating crudities of thought" and "the cautious selections and rejections" that are involved in the making of a poem. Taking his poem 'The Raven', Poe makes it manifest that "no one point in its composition is referrible either to accident or intuition—that the work proceeded step by step, to its completion with the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem."

No doubt Poe's criticism is best applicable to himself for he wrote his poems and his stories in accordance with the critical tenets he has set down. Poe's characters point out that his criticism was often unduly censorious. But if there is some truth in this, it must be remembered that when he wrote this review there was among the literary men of the day a great deal of mutual admiration which Poe felt was not quite a healthy thing. True he did allow personal prejudices to interfere with his judgement, but he was capable of recognizing merit which is evident from what he has said about Washington Irving and Nathaniel Hawthorne. Poe was in fact among the first to see Hawthorne's genius.

Poe's literary criticism must be assessed not on absolute standards but taking into account his time and its trends. W. H. Auden has given a very good summing up of Poe's genius as a critic in his introduction to the *Selected Prose and Poetry of Poe* "Poe's critical works," he writes, "like that of any significant critic must be considered in the literary context which provoked it. No critic, however pontifical his tone, is really attempting to lay down eternal truths about arts; he is always polemical, fighting a battle against the characteristic misconceptions, stupidities and weaknesses of his contemporaries."

It is unfortunate that Poe's critical acumen was forced to waste itself on works of uninteresting and third-rate authors. "The first rate critic needs," as Auden points out, "critical issues of the first importance, and these were denied him. Think of the subject that Baudelaire was granted--Delacroix, Constantin Guys, Wagner—and then of the king of books Poe was assigned to review : Noble Deeds of Women, The Christian Florist Etc...One is astounded

that he managed to remain a rational critic at all, let alone such a good one."

Poe's influence on French literature and literary criticism has been tremendous. "As far as America is concerned the important facts are that Poe had ideas and standards; that he brought a welcome professionalism to American letters; and that though he now and then 'tomahawked' innocent victims, it was good for native authors to be warned that literature was an exciting trade." No one in his time took such pains to encourage poets to take their task seriously and to make them realise the importance of prosody and to avoid faulty diction and inappropriate imagery by constant vigil and hard work.

Poe was a frank, candid and independent critic. He was impartial too. He was a linguist and scholar. He liked novelty.

R. W. EMERSON (1803-1882)
&
THE AMERICAN RENAISSANCE

Q. 24. Why is the period 1829-1860 styled the period of the American Renaissance ?

Or

What do you understand by the term 'New England Renaissance' ? Write briefly about Emerson's contribution to the American Renaissance.

Or

Account for the great popularity that Emerson enjoyed till the waning of it in the 20th century.

Ans. The period from 1829 to 1860 is known as the period of the American or the 'new England' Renaissance. It was the "Golden Day" of American literature. It is called the period of 'New England' Renaissance, because most of the writers responsible for the growth of the American Renaissance in literature were the residents of New England :— Emerson, Thoreau, Longfellow, Holmes, Lowell, Hawthorne were all New Englanders. Only Melville lived outside New England.

The main factors responsible for the flowering of American Renaissance were the following :—

(1) Cultural contact with Europe.
(2) European Romanticism.
(3) Traditional Puritan respect for the life of the mind.
(4) Growth of Nationalism in America.
(5) Growth of Democracy.
(6) Growth of Science.
(7) Growth of Philosophy, especially transcendentalism.
(8) Free thinking and social, political and economic freedom for the Whites in America.
(9) Emergence of great American literary figures such as Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, Hawthorne, Melville, etc.
(10) Enthusiasm among the Americans to develop their culture and history.
(11) Industrialisation.

Emerson's contribution to the growth of the American Renaissance was of great significance. He was the moving spirit behind it, because he was the most important figure of the

American Renaissance. He was America's intellectual declaration of independence and its intellectual constitution too. Through his personality and writings he moulded the thought of his age. His writings were like the Bible to many of his followers and admirers. He was the prophet, 'wise man, wit and poet'.

He deals almost entirely on metaphysical questions, the relation of the visible world to the soul of the individual, the reality of the spiritual element in nature, the sacred character of moral obligation, and the power of ideas. He has the spirit of man in his hand. His is the quality of the seer or prophet who believes absolutely in what he says. He combined idealism and practical shrewdness.

"Emerson's influence on the modern world has been great and far-reaching. He left his impirnt in some way upon such diverse men as Gandhi and Nietzsche, Whitman and Tagore, Carlyle and Kagawa. His words have been a vitalizing influence on the plains of Siberia and the islands of the South Seas." He also influenced Thoreau and Mark Twain. Throeau and Whitman were his disciples. Even those who rebelled against were affected by him in their rebellion. It was he who taught them what were the essenital problems in American life.

"Historically, though he was by no means our greatest literary artist, he was perhaps the most important thinker and writer we have had, the first to make our declaration of cultural independence effective, and the chief pioneer of romanticism......"

During this age of American Renaissance most of the writers came from New England except Melville. That is why it is known as the New England Renaissance. Barrett Wendell called it "The Renaissance of New England". Lewis Mumford called it "The Golden Day". During this age the men of Boston and Cambridge, Concord and Salem set forth their forceful ideas and attitudes on different aspects of human life—on religion, politics, economics, democracy, human nature and common man, industry, slavery, the Civil War, Science, etc. The Renaissace blossomed.

Emerson's contribution for the flowering of the American Renaissance is the highest. It was he who liberated the American thought from its dependence upon Europe. He, with his poems, essays, and talks, dominated the philosophical and literary scene of the day. He was the foremost among the Transcendentalists. He was the moral genius of America as Carlyle was the moral genius of England.

In his famous speech, "The American Scholar", he gave the clarion call to the American scholars and advised them not to adhere to European models but to carve out a path for themselves :

Our day of dependence", he told them, "our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close. The millions that around us are rushing into life cannot always be fed on the sere remains of foreign harvests." Emerson's exaltation of Nature, his great individualism find expression in this great speech. He invoked the scholar to lean on three influences—Nature, the past made manifest through Books and the present calling for participation and efficient leadership. Carlyle was so carried away when he read the speech that he wrote to Emerson : "I could have wept to read that speech, the clear high melody of it went tingling through my heart."

The next important speech delivered by Emerson was his Divinity School Address(1838) which brought about a veritable storm. Emerson wrote to Carlyle about its effect thus : "The publication of my Address to the Divinity College......has been the occasion of an outcry in all our leading newspapers against my 'infidelity', 'pantheism', and 'atheism.' The writers warn all and sundry against me, and against whatever is supposed to be related to my connection of opinion, etc. against Transcendetalism, Goethe and Carlyle. I am heartily sorry to see this last aspect of the storm in our washbowl." What provoked people was Emerson's the relegation of Christ to a human position along with his refusal to take the Scriptures literally. Several passages in this famous address anticipate Emerson's philosophical tenets like the 'over-soul.'

Emerson's first series of essays appeared in 1841 and th second series in 1844. The most important essays in the first series are, 'Love', 'Friendship,' 'Prudence', 'Heroism', 'Circles,' 'Intellect,' 'History,' 'Self-reliance,' 'The Over-soul' etc. In 'Self-reliance' we hear Emerson's call 'trust thyself.' It is an expression of that fierce individualism that was a striking feature of Transcedentalism. In the 'Over-soul' Emerson expresses an idea totaly different. Here he emphasises the deep mystical aspects of life. The over-soul. was Emerson's name for the divine in man. Many passaages in the essay are reminiscent of Wordsworth's 'Immortality Ode.' For instance when Emerson asserts that 'Man is a stream whose source is hidden' we are reminded of Wordsworth's line :

Trailing clouds of glory do we come,
from God who is our home.

The essay entitled 'The Poet' appeared in the second series of essays. Here Emerson works out an idea that is expressed in his journal thus : "Nothing merely ornamental can be beautiful." *To Emerson art must be functional.* He had a high sense of the exalted function of the poet. He felt that a poet while being a representative of his time must dedicate himself to beauty. He must illuminate hidden meanings. Relying on intuition for basic themes, he would tap his genius for adequate techniques. These

conditions fulfilled, the poet would become indeed a 'liberating God.' He robustly maintained that such a poet was sure to come: "Am rica is a poem in our eyes; its ample geography dazzles the imagination, and it will not wait long for metres." When eleven years after the publication of Emerson's essay Walt Whiman's 'Leaves of Grass' appeared it looked as if Emerson was something of a seer, a prophet. For Whitman met many of Emerson's requisites for the ideal bard. In 'Nature' Emerson shows his kinship with Wordsworth. That the child is in closer affinity with Nature than the adult is an idea that Wordsworth treats poetically in 'The Immortality Ode.' Emerson expresses the same when he says, "The sun illuminates only the eye of the man, but shines into the eye and the heart of the child."

Emerson's poems are usually short and their themes are more or less the same as the themes for his prose works. The themes for his poetry may be divided thus:—nature, patriotism or nationalism, personal or domestic life and reflective or philosophical. His nature poems are 'The Rhodora,' 'To The Humble Bee,' 'The Sea-shore,' 'Woodnotes I and II' and 'The Snow-Storm.' It is in the charming poem 'The Rhodora' that Emerson makes his famous, oft-quoted statement: "Beauty is its own excuse for being." His patriotic poems are, 'Boston Hymn,' 'Ode Iniscribed to W. H. Channing,' 'Voluntaries,' 'Hymn at Concord Bridge.' As examples of personal poems we may cite 'To Ellen at the South,' 'Give All to Love,' 'The Problem' etc. Examples of philosophical poems are 'The Sphinx,' 'Uriel,' 'Hamatreya,' 'Brahma,' 'Days' and 'Experience.'

Emerson's influence was not restricted to one sphere alone. It was felt on the political, social and literary life of the country. "His great role was as a lecturer, an essayist and a poet who struggled for the enfranchisement and stimulation of the inward spirit of the individual." The age welcomed his trascendental ideas gladly and whenever Emerson spoke his audiences listend in rapt attention His personality carried authority. It was his personal magic that made his works immensely popular with his contemporaries and made him the "sage of Concord."

A great factor that accounts for Emerson's immense poularity is that he spoke for the active forces that were struggling within the hearers, waiting for release. To the young especially Emerson was a prophet. His essays appealed to them much more intimately than the writings of Carlyle and the German writers. The speeches and essays of Emerson appearing at the same time were filled with the problems and dilemmas of the young. They loved him because he seemed to have shared their feelings. "Unlike the professional orators, he addressed himself to the thinking classes He spoke to the individual in each of his hearers, giving them courage to listen to the whisper of the voice within themselves. He stirred them to take life strivingly in full belief that what man had done man could

do, that the world was all opportunities, strings of tension waiting to be struck, especially by thinkers and writers to whom Emerson spoke most directly."* When Emerson's essays and lectures were published, the younger people felt as if they had heard the sound of a trumpet Their wills were roused, affections enlarged and they filled with a new light. He opened the eyes of all Americans to the great task that could be performed by the scholar. The reason why Emerson's lectures fail to rouse us as they did his audiences, is that for us the rapture has gone

His refinement, his optimism and his boundless individualism were gladly hailed as wonderful qualities. 'But in the twentieth century though Emerson is still celebrated for his style and his acquity of judgement, he no loger seems the spokesman of the nation. His firm adherence to the doctrines of self-relianc and individualism and particularly his optimism are incongruous with the current emphasis on conformity and the general pessimism about the future. In an age when cold wars seem the status quo, it is difficult to accept Emerson's buoyant faith in the inevitable progress, both economic and spiritual of mankind His ringing affirmations seem strangely out of key in a century unhappily innured to blood, sweat and tears."** Even the Essays are appreciated less by us than by people of Emerson's day. For instance **Matthew Arnold** observed that in his opinion Emerson's essays were the most important work in English prose produced in the nineteenth century. The prais seems exaggerated today, though Emerson's popularity has not gone completely **Henry James** points out that *Emerson had a genius for 'seeing character as a real and supreme thing.'* *"He serves... ..and will not wear out.....indeed we cannot afford to drop him ......He did something better than anyone else; he had a particular faculty, which had not been surpassed, for speaking to the soul in a voice of direction and authority.* Poe was violently opposed to Emerson's "mysticism for mysticism's sake." The modern mind is not too ready to accept Emerson as a metaphysical philosopher. Even his moral teachings have lost some of their early force, so that in 1914 **T. S. Eliot** *spoke of Emerson's essays as "already an encumbrance."*

Q. 25. ' Emerson's Essays are, I think, the most important work done in prose." (Matthew Arnold). Discuss.

Or

Critically evaluate and discuss Emerson as an essayist.

Ans. Besides being an eminent poet and a transcedental philosopher, Emerson wos an essayist par excellence. According to **Matthew Arnold,** *"As Wordsworth's poerry is, in my judgment,*

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* *Our Heritage* by Brookes Literary and Bettmann.
** Brown & Flanagan, *American Literature.*

the most important work done in our language during the present century, so Emerson's "Essays" are, I think, the most important work done in prose." Emerson's essays are, indeed, the most important work done in American prose, because they are the work of the master genius of wisdom among the writers of his time.

Emerson's *Essays First and Second Series* are a collection of about fifty lectures which he delivered during the period from 1836 to 1844. These series are :

The Philosophy of History (12 lectures; 1836-37).
Human Culture (10 lectures ; 1837-38).
Human Life (10 lectures ; 1838-39).
The Present Age (10 lectures ; 1839-40).
The Times (8 lectures ; 1841-42).

From the thematic point of view, his essays are of three kinds : *descriptions of the universe and its laws*(Self-Reliance, Compensation, Spiritual Laws, the Over-Soul, Circles, Experience, Nature, and Nominalist and Realist); *analysis of the moral faculties in human relationships in general* (Love, Prudence, Heroism, Character, and Manners) ; and *studies of more nearly particular problems of experience* (History, Art, The Poet, Politics, and New England Reformers).

Emerson's essays are twice-born. As mentioned by Marcus Cunliffe, "*Out of the journal came the lecture, out of the lecture series the volumes of essays.*" His experience as a Lyceum lecturer influenced the form and structure of the typical Emersonian essay. *Basically the form of his essays is oratorical*, because many of his essays are re-worked lectures—often ending with a peroration (summing up).

To open anywhere any of the volumes by Emerson is to open at once in the world of thought. *His essays like those of Bacon are dispersed meditations.* "*At twenty-one he wrote in his journal of those rare books———'the Provebs of Solomon, the Essays of Montaigne, and eminently the Essays af Bacon' - which collect and embody the wisdom of their times, and so mark the stage of human improvement.*" His is the quality of the seer or prophet who believes in what he says. Whereas Bacon was 'meanest but brightest of mankind', Emerson was the wisest and brightest of mankind. Many of his sayings have become proverbs. They will pass to posterity like the epigrams of Bacon or the sayings of Solomon. For example, mark the beauty and the epigrammatic quality of the following :

(1 "Trust thyself."

(2) "Hatch your wagon to a Star."

(3) Books are lamps "to guide our steps to the East again, where the dawn is."

(4) "Life is our dictionary." It is the "quarry from whence we get tiles and copestones for the masonry of today"

(5) "The drop is a small oc:an."

(6) "To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart, is true for all men, —that is genius. Speak your latent conviction, and it shall be the universal sense; for always the inmost becomes the outmost, and our thought is rendered back to us by the trumpets of the Last Judgement."

(7) "All things are double, one against another."

(8) "Life is a train of moods like a string of beads, and as we pass through them they prove to be many coloured lenses which paint the world their own hue, and each shows only what lies in its focus."

(9) "The death of a dear friend, wife, brother, lover, which seems nothing but pruvation, somewhat later assumes the aspects of a guide of genius; for it commonly operates revolutions in our way of life, terminates an epoch of infancy or of youth which was waiting to be closed, breaks up a wonted occupation, or a house-hold, or style of living, and allows the formation of new ones more friendly to the growth of character."

Hence, to quote **Brownell**, Emerson's essays "*are the scriptures of thought, the virgilian Lost of modern literature.*" "*Every statement stimulates thought because it is suggestive as well as expressive. Everything means something additional......Every thought is pollent rather than purely reflective.*" Emerson stimulates a mood at all times, in which effort seems needless, pity useless, conscience superfluous, logic a fetter consistency negligible, fear contemptible, courage instinctive, culture exotic. Consider merely the titles of the ten volumes of his Essays : "*They form a catalogue raisonne of wisdom, of wisdom divined and wisdom garnered, and the whole beautifully and winningly as well as pungently alembicated by an indisputably great mind.*" (**W. C. Brownell**).

Emerson's essays teach us how to reconcile good with evil, the individual with society, the rival claims of nonconformity with neighbourliness, scholarship with intuition, the need to be up and doing with the equally imperative need to sit down and think. **T. S. Eliot** has rightly viewed Emerson as one of the coutmoded "*guardians of the faith.*"

The Emersonian essay is different from the familiar personal essay of Montaigne or Lamb. Emerson's essays have a pragmatic social context which is lacking in the personal essay which starts from intimate experience, reverie, or reminiscenee. The tone of defiance and the spiritual framboyance are other characteristics of

Emerson's essay of the first phase. Yet his essays are devoid of tussing ego ; they reveal his larger self and self-trust.

Emerson's essays belong to the category of the creative essay and are different from a rational discourse There is in his essays a sequence of thought with the sustaining power of emotion. His individual experience is everyman's experience. There is a strong tendency of generalization in his essays.

The Essays of Emerson are also remarkable for their dramatic quality. The movement lends dramatic quality to the Essays. Point, counterpoint, statement, counter-statement, and affimation lend a dramatic tension to the Essays. The objectivity and detachment of the Essays are in themselves a dramatic quality. Some other characteristics of his essays as mentioned by **Dr. Spiller** are *his morning quality of recognition and confidence, his power of distilling essences that all know to be true, his gift of innumerable texts for the problems of living and thinking, his accurate reflection of the American mind and heart in its moments of aspiration.* ' These qualities have made these essays a book in our modern Bible. Emersons's shortcomings as an essayist as mentioned by **Dr. Spiller** are *his disregard rather than denial of evil, his lack of logical system, his staccato crispness of style, his didacticism his appearance of being above torment and suffering*.

Emerson's prose is simple and quaint. His imagery is of great range, from the sun and stars down to the meanest weed or insect, and he uses a number of figures of speech, analogy, antithetically balanced sentences, epigrams, aphorisms, rhetorical devices, etc. To the poet's privilege of metaphor, Emerson adds the idealist's prerogative of paradox, which is at once a way of seeing things as well as a way of saying them. It is a philosopher's game, played with appearance and reality.

If Emerson reminds us often of Milton, especially in *The American Scholar*, by the amplitude and sweep of his sentences, the rhythm and the poetry of his descriptions, he reminds us just as often of Bacon with his confident aphorisms. The fulness of the longer sentences : balanced by the sharpness of epigram and the neatness of antithesis is quite frequent. He has a whole series of antithetically balanced sentences, where he describes how experience becomes truth and art in the crucible of the scholar's mind :

> "It (the world) came into him life ; it went out from him truth. It cam· to him short lived actions ; it went out from him immortal thoughts. It came to him business ; it went from him poetry. It was deaf fact ; now, it is quick thought. It can stand, and it can go. It now endures, it now flies, it now inspires."

Readily noticeable also is the skilful use of rhetorical devices like inversion, repetition or interrogation in such a passage as :

> "Him Nature solicits with all her placid, all her monitory pictures ; him the past instructs ; him the future invites. Is not ind:ed every man a student, and do not all things exist for his behoof ? And, finally, is not the true scholar the only true master ?"

Emerson has the poet's ear for the music of words, and something even of the more obvious phonetic and euphonic satisfactions of verse may be found in Emerson's prose. Apart from the usual balancing of sound with the sense, characteristic of the antithetical construction, we notice also the devices of rhythm, the balancing of sound through repetition and contrast :

> "Every day, the sun ; and, after sunset, Night and her stars. Ever the winds blow ; ever the grass grows. Every day, men and women, conversing, beholding and beholden."

Since Emerson's essay is the gift of Emerson the journalist and the orator, its ideal is eloquence, not exposition. Emerson is the master of "spoken word." His models were the great orators —Demosthenes, Isocrates, Cicero, Burke, and Webster Every sentence of his is addressed to the mind directly It has a complete value in itself. and is not merely contributory to any general cumulative effect His essays, as they are compressed from his lectures, are tightly compressed instead of expanded. What his style lacks is art in the larger sense He has no sense of composition. His is the style of a writer who is artistic, but not an artist. To quote **Willaim Van O'Connor**, *"Emerson was the master of the pithy sentence, the comprehending paragraph. But frequently his essays seem merely a hodge-podge of brilliant paragraphs stung together without apparent scheme."*

His style is sententious. His sentences, says **Carlyle**, are *"pure Genuine Saxon ; strong and simple ; of a clearness ; of a beauty", but his paragraph was "a beautiful bag of duck-shot held together by canvas."* (Letter to Emerson, Nov. 3, 1844). Each of his essays has a circular structure, containing smaller circles within it. His method is organic, a reflection of the structure of the universe as he sees it.

Q 26. What do you understand by Transcendentalism in American Literature ? Consider Emerson as a transcendentalist.

Or

Discuss Emerson as a transcendentalist.

Ans Transcendentalism was a philosophy propagated first in Germany by philosophers such as Kant, Hegel, Fichte and

Schelling. It emphasizes idealism and spiritual truth. It is the doctrine that says that knowledge may be obtained by a study of the mental processes apart from experience. It is philosophy which is not based on experience or reason. It goes beyond human knowledge. It is known by intuition. It is, breifly speaking, another form of our *dyahn*. It affirms that man could apprehend reality by direct spiritual insight.

The term Transcendentalism has beeen philosophically defined as "the recognition in man of the capacity of knowing truth intuitive, or of attaining knowledge transcending the reach of the senses " "Transcendentalism has also been defined as Calyinism modified by the Romantic doctrine of man's natural goodness. Denying original sin, it affirmed that all men, and not merely the elect few, might achieve a state of grace by casting off external authority and responding to their own spiritual intuitions." **Ferthingham** has defined transcendentalism as "an assertion of the inalienable worth of man." It has been historically defined as "New England Transcendentalism" which was "produced by the importing of German idealism into American Unitarianism." According to **Van Wyck Brooks** and **O. L. Bettmann** "Transcendentalism referred to the self-sufficiency of the human mind, the creative powers of man. It spoke for an order of truth that transcended, by immediate perception" all external evidence......' Transcendentalism "explores inner life." It favours the idealistic view of the universe and believes in the worth of men. It is opposed to empirical thinking.

Emerson is the founder and the father of American Transcendentalism. His *Nature* is the Bible of transcendentalism. He and his followers (Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville, Whitman) acquired transcendentalism partly from the Germans directly, and partly from their English interpreters such as Coleridge and Carlyle. Among the famous American transcendentalists were R. W. Emerson, George Ripley, Honson Alcott, Margaret Fuller, Henry David Thoreau, and Theodore Parker.

Transcendentalism emerged as "a full fledged movement of New England" between 1815 and 1836. The first date marks the maturing the liberalizing ministry of Wiliiam Ellery Channing ; the second, the publication of Emerson's *Nature*, probably the best systematic expression of the transcendental philosophy. Thereafter the movement continued to expand, first as a revolt against the sterile Unitarian orthodoxy, then as a protest against the continuing cultural dependence of America on Europe, and finally as a profound exploration of the spiritual foundations and moral implications of the new democracy.

Emerson served transcendentalists' cause not merely by establishing the Transcendental Club in 1836 but also by publishing works such as *Nature* (1836) which became "the Bible of the early

Transcendentalists," "The American Scholar", and the "Harvard Divinity School Address." In these he asserted that man and his world formed a perfect harmony. Life to him was a treasure hunt, with abundant clues, and prizes for everybody. His central message was self reliance Every individual, he believed, shared in the divinity which pervaded the universe and should therefore learn to turst his own intuitions, even when they conflicted with convention and tradition. "In all my lectures," he wrote in 'Society and Solitude', "I have taught one doctrine, namely the infinitude of the private man." In proportion as men acquired a genuine self-reliance, he believed, any form of coercive authority would become unnecessary. In his essay 'Self-Reliance' he wrote : "No law can be sacred to me but that of my own Nature." Emerson always stressed the lord's word, "the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink ; but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost " His stress is always on inward reality and individual intuition. He was one who believed in a true and judicious synthesis of mind and matter, intuition and intellect (NORMAN FORESTERY & H. H. CLARK). His attack on traditional Christianity symbolised his distrust of tradition in all forms. Against traditional religion he advocated intuition, against formal theology he recognized the authenticity of the individual relationship between man and God. He went up to the extent of saying that religion which is afraid of science dishonours God and commits suicide.

In *Nature*, he wrote, "There seems to be a necessity in spirit to manifest itself in material forms ; and day and night, river and storm, beast and bird, acid and alkali, pre-exist in necessary Ideas in the mind of God." To him man is the mill wheel, the Over-Soul (God) is the mountain stream. "When I watch that flowing river," says Emerson, "which, out of regions I see not, pours for a reason its streams into me, I see that I am a pensioner ; not a cause but a surprised spectator of this ethereal water ; that I desire and look up and put myself in the attitude of reception, but from some alien energy the visions come." He observes that in times of spiritual depression, "we are like millers on the lower levels of a stream, when the factories above them have exhausted the water." Another oft repeated figure of Emerson represents man as a tidal stream, and the Over Soul as the sea. Spiritual inspiration is described as "an ebb of the individual rivulet before the flowing surges of the sea of life."

According to Emerson, every 'natural fact' is 'a symbol of some spiritual fact'. "The axioms of physics", he declares, "translate the laws of ethics." The world of matter is a reflection of the world of spirit, which is the true reality. Emerson believed that through his own soul each man was able to participate in an experience of God (or the Over Soul), of which Nature is the material embodiment. Thus, natural law and moral law are

parallel expressions of the operation of the Over Soul, and intuitive insight can attune men's minds to divine will, thus achieving perfection He proclaimed : "The true Christianity,—a faith like Christ's i the infinitude of man,—is lost. None believeth in the soul of man, but only in some man or person old and departed. Ah me ! no man goeth alone. All men go in flocks to this saint or that poet, avoiding the God who seeth in secret." So he advised men : "Make your own Bible. Select and collect at the words and sentences that in all your reading have been to you like the blast of a trumpet, out of Shakespeare, Seneca, Moses, John, and Paul." He also proclaimed the glorification of intuition and the repudiation of all external religious authority.

Emerson found some virtues in Christianity, he also found some defects in it. In his famous "The Divinity School Address" he mentions two great advantages Christinaity has given us : first the Sabbath, the jubilee of the whole world, and secondly the institution of preaching. In the same 'Address' he mentions the defects of Christinaity which "has fallen into the error that corrupts all attempts to communicate religion." It is "not the doctrine of the soul, but an exaggeration of the personal, the positive, the ritual. It has dwelt, it dwells, with noxious exaggeration about the person of Jesus. The soul knows no persons. It invites every man to expand to the full circle of the universe, and will have no preferences but those of spontaeous love."

In his essay, "Self-Reliance", Emerson stresses the value of human soul or intuition. His dictum is "Trust thyself." One should act according to the dictates of his soul, and should not be led away by some other external considerations or temptation. In another essay, "The Over-Soul" Emerson says : "The soul in man is not an organ, but animates and exercises all the organs ; is not a function, like the power of memory, of calculation, of comparison, but uses these as hands and feet; is not a faculty but a light; is not the intellect or the will, but the master of the intellect and the will, is the background of our being, in which they lie—an immensity not possessed and that cannot be possessed. From within or from behind. a light shines through us upon things and makes us aware that we are nothing, but the light is all."

Emerson deals almost entirely in metaphysical questions : the relation of the visible world to the soul of the individual, the reality of the spiritual element In nature, the sacred character of moral obligation, and the power of ideas. He has no reasoned and complete system of philosophy resting on a few axioms. He is charged for ignoring evil in the universe. Poe brushed Emerson off as "little more than a respectfully imitation of Carlyle" and as belonging "to a class of gentelmen with whom we have no patience whatever—the mystic for mysticism's sake." The father of the novelist Henry James addressed Emerson in exasperation, "Oh

you man without a handle." Yet also acknowledged that Emerson 'unconsciously brought you face to face with the infin te in humanity."

Emerson attracted Whitman who said, "I was simmering, simm ring, simmering; Emerson brought me to a boil." Emily Dickenson, although not a disciple of Emerson, could hardly have written as she did without him; and her anonymously published "Success Is Counted Sweetest" was widely ascribed to Emerson. The late Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, in one of his letters to his British friend Pollock wrote : "the only fire-brand of my youth that burns to me as brightly as ever, is Emerson." Among the later generation, Henry James showed an awareness of Emersonian concepts in presenting the heroine of *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881, who has been called "a daughter of the transcendental afterglow." In this way transcendentalism had entered as much into culture at all levels in the nineteenth century as Freudianism has entered into it today.

Q. 27. "Though Emerson was not, technically speaking, a philosopher, nonetheless he did say wise things about most of the problems with which philosophers are concerned." Discuss.

Ans. Emerson was America's sage, seer and prophet who believed absolutely what he said. He was the American Carlyle, the American Plato, and the American Solomon. He dealt almost enitrely in metaphysical questions, the relation of the visible world to the soul of the individual, the reality of the spiritual element in nature, the scared character of moral obligation, and the power of ideas. Yet he has offered to systematic philosophy. He is rather an electic. In all his lectures, he says, he has taught "the infinitude of the private man."

Emerson's *Essays* proclaim the self-reliance of a man who believed himself representative of all men since he felt himself intuitively aware of God's universal truths He spoke to a nineteenth century that was ready for an emphasis on individualism and responsive to a new optimism that linked God, nature, and man into a magnificent cosmos.

Emerson himself spoke as one who had found in Transcendentalism a positive answer to the static Unitarianism of his day. He had been a Unitarian minister for three years but he had resigned because in his view the observance of the Lord's Supper could not be justified in the Unitarian church.

Through his essays and addresses Emerson became not only the leading transcendentalist in America, but also one of the greatest if least formal of American philosophers. The latter

accomplishment may be attributed more to the spirit of his philosophy than to its technical excellence, for Emerson had little respect for l gic, empiricism, and linguistic analysis—features common to the work of other great American philosophers such as Peirce, William James and John Dewey. Nor can Emerson be compared in his method to such a philosopher as Alfred North Whitehead, for Emerson disdained speculative adventures, he believed himself to be affirming what nature told him, and nature spoke directly of God and of God's laws.

Emerson's *Nature* (1836) was the first definitive statement of his philosophical perspective, and within this work may be found most of the chracteristic elements of Emerson's thought. The basic idea is that nature is God's idea made apparent to man. Thus, "the whole of nature is a metaphor of the human mind." "The axioms of physics translate the laws of ethics," and "This relation between the mind and matter is got fancied by some poet, but stands in the will of God, and so is free to be known by all men." Emerson asserted emphatically that "day and night, river and storm, bees and birds, acid and alkali, pre-exist in necessary Ideas in the mind of God" ; hence he agreed with those who supposed that nature reveals spiritual and moral truths Not only does nature reveal truths ; it also disciplines men, rewarding them when nature is used properly, punishing them when it is abused.

One secret of Emerson's charm was his ability to translate metaphysical conviction into vivid images. Having argued that nature is the expression of God's idea, and having concluded that "The moral laws lie at the centre of nature and radiate to the circumstance," he illustrated the moral influence of Nature by asking, "who can guess how much firmness the sea-beaten rock has taught the fishermen ?" The danger in Emerson's method, however, was that readers tended to forget that his idealism was philosophically, not merely poetically, intended ; he believed literally that only spirit and its ideas are real ; he admitted the possibility that nature "outwardly exists," that is, that physical objects corresponding to his sensations exist, but he pointed out that since he was able to test the authenticity of his senses, it made no difference whether such outlying objects existed. All that he could be sure of were his ideas, and that, whether directly or indirectly the ideas came from God. For Emerson, then, idealism was not only a credible philosophy, but also the only morally significant one.

If nature is God's idea made apparent to men, it follows that the way to God's truth is not by reason or argument but by simple and reverent attention to the facts of nature, to what man perceives when his eye is innocent. Emerson criticises science not because it was useless, but because more important matters, those having a moral bearing, confronted man at every moment in the world of

nature; the individual needed only to intuit nature, to see it as it was without twisting it to fit his philosophy or his science, in order to know God's thoughts. Thus in the essay "Nature" Emerson wrote that "nature is the incarnation of a thought, and turns to a thought ag in... The world is mind precipitated......" He added, with assurance, "Every moment instructs, and every object: for wisdom is infused into every form."

The ideas which Emerson has endorsed in *Nature* found explicit moral application in the address titled "The American Scholar," delivered before the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Cambridge in 1837. Emerson defined the scholar as "Man Thinking," and he declared that the main influences of the scholar's education are nature. books and action The duties of a scholar all involve self trust; he must be both free and brave. The rewards of such freedom and bravery are inspiring; the mind is altered by the truths uncovered, and the whole world will come to honour the independent scholar. It was in this address that Emerson said that "the ancient precept, 'Know thyself,' and the modern precept, 'study nature,' become at last one maxim."

The essay "Self-Reliance," included in the First Series, emphasizes the importance of that self trust to which Emerson referred in his Phi Beta Kappa address. It is understandale this emphasis seemed necessary to Emerson. If nature reveals the moral truth which God intends for man's use, then three elements involved in the critical human situation: nature, man, and man's attitude towards nature. It is possible to be blind to the truths about us; only the man who is courageous enough to be willing to be different in his search and conviction is likely to discover what is before every man's eyes. Emerson emphasized self-reliance not because he regarded the self, considered as a separate entity, important, but because he believed that the self is part of the reality of God's being and that in finding truth for oneself, provided one faces nature intuitively, one finds what is true for all men.

That Emerson's philosophy was not an endorsement of selfish behaviour is clear from his emphasis upon the use of the mind as an instrument for the intuitive understanding of universal truths and laws, but it is possible to misinterpret "Self-Reliance" as a joyous celebration of individuality. A sobering balance is achieved by the essay "The Over Soul" in which Emerson subordinates the individual to the whole: "Meantime within man is the soul of the whole......the eternal one." Using language reminiscent of Platonism, Emerson wrote that the soul "gives itself, alone, original and pure, to the Lonely, Original and Pure, who, on that condition, gladly inhabits, leads and speaks through it."

Emerson valued the poet because the poet uses his imagination to discern the meanings of sensuous facts. The poet sees and

expresses the beauty in Nature because he recognizes the spiritual meaning of events. He takes old symbols and gives them new uses, thereby making nature the sign of God. In the essay "The Poet," Emerson wrote that the poet's inside is "a very high sort of seeing," a way of transcending conventional modes in order to attend directly to the forms of things.

It is a misunderstanding of Emorson to regard him as a sentimental mystic, as one who lay on his back and saw divinity in every cloud. Emerson's transcendental insight is more akin to the intelligence of the Platonic philosopher who, having recognized his own ignorance, suddenly finds himself able to see the universal in the jumble of particular facts. Emerson may be criticised for never satisfactorily relating the life of contemplation to the life of practical affairs, but he cannot be dismissed as an iconoclastic mystic. For him the enquiring soul and the heroic soul were one, and the justification of self-reliance and meditation was in terms of the result, in the individual soul, of the effort to recognize the unity of all men. In "Experience", Emerson chooses knowing in preference to doing, but it is clear that he was rejecting a thoughtless interest in action and results. In "Character" and again in "Politics" he emphasized the importance of coming to have the character of transcending genius, of spirit which has found moral law and in nature and has adapted it for use in the world of men. The transforming power of spirit properly educated and employed was something Emerson counted on, and he was concerned to argue that such power is not easily achieved.

Emerson defended democracy as the form of government best fitted for Americans whose religion and tradition reflect the desire to allow the judgements of citizens to be expressed in the laws of the State. But he cautioned that "Every actual State is corrupt," and added "Good men must not obey the laws too well." Here the independent spirit concerns the laws of God, demands heroism and possibly, like Thoreau, civil disobedience.

Scholars have written innumberable articles and books attempting to account for Emerson's influence—which continues to be profound on American thought. If agreement is ever reached, it seems likely that it will involve acceptanee of the claim that Emerson whatever his value as a philosopher, gave stirring expression to the American faith in the creative capacity of the individual soul.

It has become common place to think of Emerson's ideas as stemming from neo-Platonism, German idealism, English romanticism, and Swedenborgian protestantism but his actual knowledge of these movements came late, and they served him more as symbols and evidence than they did as sources. The core of his thinking came from the life around him, which he breathed as naturally as he breathed the New England air of Concord: and his

principal ideas were set by the tone and atmosphere of the time and place in which he lived, which was less New England than it was America. Impressed as he was by the English poets of the nineteenth century and by Hindu mysticism, as a man of letters in a significant period of American history, he was singularly unaffected by the methods or subjec matter of either. He believed he recognized in their attitudes the roots of American idealism, and it is, even now, more than a century later, too soon to say he was not right.

Q. 28. Bring out the impact of oriental thought on Emerson's mind and convictions.

Or

"Emerson is probably the most important American illustrating the impact of eastern philosophy " Discuss.

Ans. Emerson, beyond doubt, worked under the stimulus from the Orient. He was possibly the first known American writer who read the Hindu Scriptures and philosophies very well. It was he who inspired Thoreau to read them; his library supplied him the required material about the Hindus and Asians. He was also the inspirer of Walt Whitman, whose use of the Vedantic Philosophy is so complete and interesting. Prof. Mazoomdar rightly says, "He ought to have been born in India."

Ralph Waldo Emerson knew the Vedas the Laws of Manu, the Purans (especially the Vishnupurana and the Mahabharat, including the Bhagvad Gita) and Katha Upanishad. He also knew Confucius and Lao-Tze, the Chinese philosophers. He was attracted towards and made use of Persian poetry, especially the poetry of Hafiz and Saadi. But it were the Hindu scriptures that influenced him most About the *Vedas* he said :

> "It is sublime as heat and night and breathless ocean. It contains every religious sentiment. all the grand ethics which visit in turn each noble and poetic mind and nothing is easier than to separate what must have been the primeval inspiration from the endless ceremonial nonsense which caricatures and contradicts through every chapter It is of no use to put away the book ; if I trust myself in the words or in boat upon the pond, nature makes a Brahmin of me presently. Eternal necssity, eternal compensation, unfathomable power, unbroken silence—this is her creed."

So he looked upon the sacred writings of the Hindus like a Brahmin. Emerson's belief in transmigration of soul, the doctrine of fate, Atman-Brahman unity, Maya, and Karma, shows Emerson's indebtedness to oriental thought. In "Poetry and

Imagination," Emerson expressed his convinction that the Indian scriptures were "the best gymnastics of the mind, as showing treatment. All European libraries might be read without the swing of this gigantic arm being suspected. But these orintal deal with worlds and pebbbles freely. In 'Progress of Culture,' he asserts that Hindu scriptures like the Vedas, the Institutes of Manu, the Pu.anas, the poems of Mahabharat and the Ramayan are "names hidden through their very superiority to their co-equals."

In his essays, Emerson frequently refers to and quotes from the Hindu scriptures. He alludes to the Hindu mythology in the essay 'inspiration' and in 'An Address' to the "astronomical monuments of the Hindoos." The Hindu lawgiver Manu is referred to in the essays, Poetry and Imagination.' 'Greatness' and 'Plato ! New Readlings'. Budha and Budhism find mention in the essays 'Greatness' and 'Representative Men'. The Hindu scriptures are also quoted in the essays 'The Methods of Nature', 'Worship', 'Plato : Or the Philosopher', 'Swedenborg : Or the Mystic' and 'Goethe : Or the Writer."

The Hindu doctrines of Maya, Karma and the Immortality of the Soul are frequently alluded to in Emerson's writings. The religious aspect of 'rebirth' in Hindu philosophy attracted Emerson most In one of his journals he said : "Then I discovered the secret of the world; that all things subsist, and do not die, but only retire a little from sight and afterwards return again." In many ways he referred to the idea of eternal flux or the transmigration of human soul. In the writing of his poems, Emerson derived some suitable themes and titles from the Hindu scriptures directly. Thus, for instance, "Brahma" comes from the *Upanishads*, and "Hamatreya" from the *Vishnu Purana*. Other poems of Emerson which derive inspiration from the Indian scriptures are Wood Notes, The Celesital Love, Sphinx and Spirits. "Brahama" is the quintessence of Emerson's oriental understanding. We quote to show the echoes of Indian scriptures in it :

"If the red slayer thinks he slays,
Or if the slain thinks he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again.
Far or forgot to me is near;
Shadow and sunlight are the same;
The vanished gods to me appear;
And one to me are shame and fame.
X X X
The strong gods pine for my abode,
And pine in vain the sacred Seven;
But thou, meek lover of the good :
Find me : and turn thy back on heaven."

The central concept of the poem can safely be said to have been

taken from the 19th verse of the *Gita* (Ch. II). In the *Katha Upanishad* also Emerson saw a passage which had a direct echo of the theme of his poem 'Brahma' : "If the slayer thinks that I slay ; if the slain thinks I am slain, then both of them do not know well (The soul) does not slay, nor is it slain." In the poem 'Woodnotes', Emerson asks :

> "Who can tell him what he is
> Or how meet in human self
> Coming and past eternities."

The following passages would further bring out the impact of the oriental thought on Emerson :

(a) "Alike to him the better, worse,—
The glowing angel, the outcast coarse." (*Woodnotes*)

(b) "Where unlike things are like
Where good and ill
And joy and moan
Melt into one......" (*The Celestial Love*)

(c) "From thyself thou canst not flee,
From thyself no more can we." (*Spirits*)

(d) "I am thy spirit, yoke-fellow ;
Of thine eye I am eye beam." (*The Sphinx*)

Q. 29. Bring out Emerson's theory of poetry.

Or

Discuss Emerson as a poet.

Ans. Had American temperament been not more prone towards prose, Emerson would have become as great a poet as an essayist. He inhaled poetry from the very young age ; he contemplated and expressed himself in poetry, for poetry was the fittest medium of expression according to Emerson. To him the poet was the pivotal man of the old and the new times. He shuts up the old. The following lines of Emerson seem to summarize his aims and ideals in poetry :

> "I will not read a pretty tale
> To pretty people in a nice saloon
> Borrowed from their expectation
> But I will sing aloud and free
> From the heart of the world."

Thus freedom was the main aim and ideal of Emerson the poet—freedom from the past tradition, from the hackneyed words and stock phrases, from stereotype diction and crowded imagery. He wanted to breath fresh air into poetry ; he wanted transcendental and spiritual poetry. He found his chief models in the

seventeenth century school of metaphysical poets—Marvel, Crashaw, Donne, and others. He joined in him the task of Dante, of Milton, and of Donne together without reaching the height of any of them. He favoured radicalism in place of convention. summarising his theory of poetry, Miss Gorely observes: "Emerson...... believed that poetry...comes into being as the result of inspiration. In that moment the poet sees the very essence of things......The poet makes the unseen visible by means of language. But he is not the conscious creator. Vision, also shows him the symbols and the thought takes its own form in language that is rhythmical. Because of this, there is a certain indwelling beauty of poetry......poetry is spiritual and forms a link between visible and invisible world."

"It is not metres, but metre making argument," said Emerson, "that makes a poem......" Emerson valued the poet because the poet u es his imagination to discern the meanings of sensuous facts. The poet sees and expresses the b·auty in Nature because he recognizes the spiritual meaning of events. He takes old symbols and gives them new uses, thereby making uature the sign of God In the essay "The Poet", Emerson wrote that the poet's inside is "a very high sort of seeing," a way of transcending conventional modes in order to attend directly to the forms of things..." Emphasizing the role of the poet, Emerson seems to give a defence of poetry. He says, "The poets are thus liberating gods. The ancient British bards had for the title of their order, 'Those who are free throughout the world'. They are free, and they make us free An imaginative book renders us much more service at first, by stimulating us through its tropes, than afterward when we arrive at the precise sense of the author......"

The active function of poetry, as he saw it, was to make manifest and specific the correspondence between the real and the ideal, a task which rhythm alone could not accomplish. Emerson united the faith of religion to the challange of science. Like Wordsworth he believes that the poetic diction should be simple, straightforward and devoid of all artificialities and conventions. It should be spontaneous and powerful : it should echo the celestial music : it should express the eternal and ideal. That is why he wrote philosophical poems. Whereas Poe sought an aesthetic base for the art; Emerson, a moral Peo explored mainly the possibilities of the rhythm; Emerson, of symbol. Together they broke away from the binding taboos in the sphere of poetry. Emerson called himself 'a born poet', and he was right in his claim.

His poetry is lucid and serene ; it has the exuberance of Wordsworthian poetry. It is the expression of the true. the good and the beautiful. There are no poems of a fundamentally personal, passionate and lyrical nature. Among the poets of the New England group he alone has a self-sustaining and permanent existence, that Longfellow, Whittier, Holmes, Lowell are like the

bushes under this single soaring tree. **Dr. Shiv Kumar** calls him "a poet among philosophers and a philosopher among poets."

The major shortcomings of Emerson's poetry, as viewed by **W. C Brownell**, are the absence of art, lack of communion with the world ; 'esoteric and elusive' nature, his poetry is meant to please himself. It has "experimental, tenative, adventurous air." **Prof. Woodbery**, himself a poet, maintains that Emerson was "fundamentally a poet with an imperfect faculty of expression." He is rather deficient in sentiment ' Neither passion nor pathos, nor indeed any depth of feeling properly to be called human fell in with Emerson's scheme of things. His idealism was, in essence, intellectual One may almost say that he almost shrinks from feeling Without distinction in art, in imaginative construction in concrete imagery, in sensuousness or in sentiment, Emerson's poetry is, like his philosophy, very largely an affair of the intellect. And even as such it is fragmentary, inconclusive, and only now and then lighted by felicities of a penetrating, thrilling pungency, inspired by a peculiar spiritual elevation. His poetry lacks Donne's wit, Milton's loftiness and style and vocabulary, Dante's status and vocation. the ardour and lyricism of the great Romantic poets too is not there, nor is there the restraint of the classicists and their urbanity or perfection Mr. Brownell is perhaps right in his assessment when he says, "Emerson's real greatness appears in the Essays," and not in his poems.

In spite of the criticism of his poetry by Woodberry, Ludwig, Brownell and others, his poetry has some value. He has given something ins inctive to the coming generations. **Lowell** in his 'A Fable for Critics' has praised Emerson's poems by calling them "mines of rich matter" having a "grand stroke." He is the seer, the saver, the namer. and the representative of beauty. Like the poet defined by him, Emerson is the Aeolian harp that "trembles to the cosmic breath." He is also Marlin, the traditional bard, the wise man, the magician, whose "blows are strokes of fate."

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HENRY DAVID THOREAU
(1817-1862)

Q. 30. Explain why Henry David Thoreau is the most interesting of the Transcendentalists.

Ans. Among the notables of Concord Henry David Thoreau (1817—1862) was the most prominent. Among Transcendentalists he occupies a unique position; for he carried out in actual life what most others including Emerson only preached. He lived out Emerson's doctrines of non-conformity and self-reliance and the individualism that Thoreau prcatised went beyond that which Emerson advocated. According to Henry Seidel Canby Henry Thoreau is the supreme example in American culture of the man who did what he wanted, the man who best typifies the rugged individalism of the nineteenth century. Thoreau remained all his life the symbol of the man of high idealism and simple living His peculiar life and the high literary merits of his writings have made him undoubtedly the most interesting among the Transcendentalists.

Of the 'Concord group' Thoreau alone was born in Concord. He grew up there and lived there till his death in 1862 His meeting with Emerson took place soon after graduating from Harvard. This meeting induced Thoreau to take to the happy practice of keeping a journal He tried teaching for a while He made a trip on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers for a while in the company of his brother John whose death in 1842 was a personal catastrophe for Henry. The trip served as the basis of Thoreau's first book "A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers" (1849). Thoreau's unusual idealism made him choose an unusual way of living He built a hut near Walden Pound and he lived there, though for a while he resided in Emerson's house.

While many writers of the period were non-commital in their attitude to the abolitionist movement, Thoreaus's excessive idealism was drawn to it immediately. He was quite unafraid and loud in his criticism of a state that allowed the institution of slavery. He even made a bold attempt to defend John Brown who was hanged for resorting to violence in order to free the slaves. Thoreau in his extreme hatred of such a government even courted imprisonment rather then pay tax. His views on government are expounded in the wonderful essay 'Civil Disobedience' which according to Gandhiji's own avowel,influenced his thinking greatly.

During Thoreau's life time only two of his books were published—"A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers" and

"Walden." Most of his essays appeared in the Transcendental journal 'The Dial.' Thoreau wrote poems too but he was discouraged by Emerson's di approval of them. He loved poetry and once said :

> *"My life has been the poem I would have writ,*
> *But I could not both live and utter it."*

A great passion with Thoreau was nature; so he wrote verse depicting Nature as in ' The River Swelleth More and More," "When Winter fringes every bough " "The Inward Morning" reveals Thoreau's power to 'anticipa'e or to sympathise with the breezes and colours of the dawn.' Thoreau's verse like that of Emerson was technically faulty. The excessive use of conceits and mannerisms reminds us of the seventeenth century metaphysical poets. Thoreau admired them and naturally their influence crept into his poetical works.

"Two aspects of Transcendentalism were especially significant to Thoreau. The first was the stress which it laid upon solitary communion with the Infinite. Here it was in agreement with his natural impulses and with all his reading in Oriental literature. The important place Wordsworth gave it in his practice and in the pages of his verse also was an encouragement. All the Transcendentalists believed in the ecstatic moment, though Thoreau attained no loser resmblance to the well-defined trances of Alcott than his occasional rhapsodic passages record. The second aspect of Transcendentalism of great importance to Thoreau was the assurance it afforded him that what his inuition, his Quakerlike "inner light", told him was right, was right. This doubtless stiffened his back in many an unconventional moment, and played its part in making him ready to speak about slavery, when the time came, at Framingham and Concord."

Traces of transcendentalism are found not only in his poems but also in prose and chiefly in the *Dial* which was a journal of the transcendentalists. In *Walden*, he has said : "There are now a-days professors of philosophy, but not philosophers. To be philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts, nor even to found a school, but so to love wisdom as to live a life of simpilicity, independence, magnanimity and trust. It is to solve some of the problems of life, not only theoretically, but practically." He fulfilled this goal ; he was a transcendentalist in this practical sense. He himself confessed that he was a Transcendentalist. He said in a letter to Charles C. Morse in 1860 : ' I am in the lecture field, but my subjects are not scientific, rather Transcendental and aesthetic."

Q. 31. Give a general estimate of Thoreau as a writer.

Or

Discuss Thoreau as an essayist.

Or

Throw light on the various aspects of Thoreau's art.

Ans. His Major Works

Thoreau is a writer of biography, essayist, and a poet. He is also a philosopher in the informal sense. His chief works are *College Essays, The Service, The Natural History of Massachusetts, A Walk to Wachusett, The Landlord, A Winter Walk, Thomas Carlyle and His Works, Slavery in Massachusetts, Walden, A Plea for Captain John Brown and Other Brown Essays, The Succession of Forest Trees, Autumnal Tints, Wild Apples, Life Without Principle, Walking, Poems, Excursions, The Maine Woods, Cape Cod, A Yankee in Canada, Journal.* He also wrote poems. Nevertheless, his most important prose works are *Walden, The Week*, and his writings in the *Dial,* a journal of the transcendentalists.

The Transcendentalist

Thoreau was a disciple of Emerson in following Transcendentalism. He maintained an intimate, and sympathetic relation to the Transcendental Club, to the leading Transcendentalists as individuals, and to the *Dial*, their periodical. Transcendentalism referred to the self-sufficiency of the human mind, the creative powers of man. It spoke for an order of truth that transcended by immediate perception, all external evidence. Thoreau believed in all this and saw the manifestation of God in Nature. He recommended a life close to nature full of economy and simplicity. Thoreau himself wrote in his *Journal* in 1853, "I am a mystic, a transcendentalist, and a natural philosopher to boot." In a letter to Charles C. Morse he wrote : "I am in the lecture field, but my subjects are not scientific, rather Transcendental and aesthetic." It was as a transcendentalist that he laid stress upon solitary communion with the Infinite and believed a thing right if his intuition said that was right. The best examples of his Transcendentalism are found in the contribution to *The Dial.* To him Nature was the best resort. Nature pulsates with life. He believed that man 'flows unto God when the channel of purity is open.

As a Critic of Society

Thoreau was a critic of a society. He was a rebel. He discarded American materialism and slavery in some of America's districts. In his *Slavery in Massachusetts* he launched two fronted attack against the conventional mode of living : (1) reform the

individual, and (2) destroy the corrupting institutions. Thoreau attacks herein both the press and the church as defenders of slavery. In *Walden*, he recommended the life of quiet desperation which most men lead ; the economic fallacy which is responsible for the situation in which they find themselves ; the meaning of life close to nature and its rewards ; the higher laws so essential for a spiritual living.

Thoreau also attacked contemrorary fashions and clothes and the ways of living of the Americans. He advised them to be simple and economic, pure in behaviour, word, thinking and action.

The Ideal Hermit & Lover of Nature

Thoreau was an ideal hermit. Emerson called him a "stoic and hermit." R L. Stevenson called him a "skulker" because he shirked his social responsibilities and retreated to Walden Pond, a lonely place to live in. But he did not hate mankind or human life ; he did not seek an escape from it. He was an ideal hermit devoted to his work. His *Civil Disobedience* was a Mahatma's call to another Mahatma (Gandhi). He liked simplicity, economy, truth, purity of living and thinking, austerity, sincerity, servity, and calm of mind and peace of environment. All these are the characteristics of a hermit. He advocated fair means for fair ends. He was a truth-seeker. He was a practical idealist.

Thoreau was a prophet of nature ; he was its lover and worshipper. He loved the hills and rocks, the rivers and ponds, the trees, plants and flowers, the animals and birds, the greenery and the forests, the fauna and flora. He recommended a life very close to nature. He was a nature-poet and a poet-naturalist.

As an Artist

Thoreau's total work consists of twenty volumes, including his letters, speeches, essays, poems, and journals. This includes his best works *Walden* and *The Week*. He has been variously called as a poet naturalist, a Transcendentalist, a cosmic Yankee, a bachelor of Nature, and a social rebel. He is not all these separately, but all in one. He is indeed a challenge to the so-called sophisticated man.

Thoreau lacked a sense of humour. Lowell also charges him somewhat fairly, that Thoreau lacked the capacity for organization. Wladen was thrifty and cared much for the precision of phraseology. *Walden* is his masterpiece in mosaic It is the game of his great care, artistry, finish and economy of language. Since he was engaged in writing autobiographical narrative, he could not be extremely organizational. Yet he is not always haphazard.

As a prose writer Thoreau employed analogies in abundance and recommended their use to those beginning the study of the art of writing. He was, beyond doubt, guilty of chronic exaggera-

tion, knew it himself, and sometimes defended it, as where he maintained that poetry is only an exaggeration of history. Later on he abandoned this concept. In matters of style and ideas Carlyle's influence is profound. Both used highly conventional expressions. While describing Nature, Thoreau's prose becomes delicate, simple yet eloquent, colloquial austere. His style has been praised for its simplicity too. His writing is rich in similes and metaphors. What Thoreau said of Carayle could be said for his own work too. Speaking about Carlyle's books Thoreau said : "they are...works of art only as the plough, and corn mill, and stream engine not as pictures and statues." In part his writing is reminiscent of the pamphleteering prose. He had a passion for terse and compact sentences. His style is also remarkable for clarity, for descriptive ability, his command of epigram, his use of symbolic analogy and his sense of language."

As a poet he loved Homer, Ossian, Chaucer and Wordsworth. He said that the best poetry is not counted on the poet's fingers but on his heart strings. "A true poem is distinguished not so much by a felicious expression, or any thought it suggests, as by the atmosphere which surrounds it." According to Brooks and Bettmann, "His poems were of a homespun kind, well woven, but indifferently out The smoke obscured the flame, but now and then a jet rose out of the smoke, and Henry wrote a line or two that shivered its way up the spinal marrow. If his poems were often disjointed, like his prose, it was because of this habit of journalizing. He jotted down his pragraphs and verses and waited for a cooler moment to patch them together,—a good way for epigrams, but fatal for poetry, and none too good for prose."

Writing about his journal Brooks and Bettmann say, "His journal was a calendar of the ebbs and flows of the soul. It was a beach on which the waves might cast their pearls and seaweed." What is true of *Journal* is true of his whole writing.

He believed in the sincerity of writing. To him "An honest book is the noblest work of man." He liked biographies and travels most. His books are wildly natural and primitive, mysterious and marvellous, ambroisial and fertile, as a fungus or a lichen. He is cool and calm. He cannot inflame the minds of his audience. According to him, the writer is a prophet. **Lowell**, rightly or wrongly, interprets Thoreau as a romanticist. In the words of **Ludwig Lewisohn**. "He has something of their (Greeks) limpidness, severity, colour of dawn and dusk .... He is, as a mere writer, the soundest as model and influence among American men of letters" Alone with the help of his *Walden*, he has been put on the shelf of classics.

There are oriental echoes in Thoreau as they are in Emerson and Whitman. His response to Indian philhsophy is intellectual. He called himself 'a Yogi'. He learnt oriental literature through

French and English sources. He compares the Hindu scriptures with the Bible and Christ with Budha in *A Week*. Of all the Hindu scriptures, the *Bhagvadgita* wielded the most potent influence upon him He calls it "one of the noblest and most sacred scriptures which have come down to us." He calls it "the New Testament"; he loves its sanity and sublimity and its stupendous and cosmogonal philosophy.

Lowell calls Thoreau merely a copy of Emerson. **Stevenson** called him "a skulker," a man possessed of negative virtues. who had no courage to face the hazards of life. No doubt he was an observer and a natural historian, industrious and persistent. yet, to quote **John Burroughs**, "He has added no new line or touch to the portrait of bird or beast that I can recall......To the last his ornithology was not quite sure not quite trustworthy." **L Powys** has said that Thoreau's passion of Nature is not consumming, that he has no sense for style, and that his personality was underdeveloped resulting in the suppression of his normal emotions. So he concluded that Thoreau is "neither a profound thinker nor a great writer."

Thoreau's admirers are of a different opinion. **Canby** calls him "a great writer as well as a great man" ; "one of the masters of English prose, purer, stronger, racier, closer to a genuine life rhythm, than any of his contemporaries in England or America." And to quote **Walter Blair** & Others : "The growth of Taoreau's frame in the third and fourth decades of the present century has no doubt been owing not only to a recognition of his fine literary qualities but also to various specail appeals which his works make to modern readers. His lessons in simplicity and economy have appealed to those who are harassed by the complexity and expense of modern life. His almost primitive intimacy with nature has come home to a generation whose mode of life is largely artificial and divorced from natural influences His sturdy, rebellious individualism has had a special attraction for members of an increasingly regimented society. His indigenousness, deeply rooted in a particular place, has been warning and a rebuke to a generation so mobile and migratory that many people can scarcely be said to have roots anywhere. In short, we read Thoreau for those values which we have lost and which more and more seem necessary to our health and vigour and peace of mind."

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Q. 32 Discuss Thoreau as a prophet of Nature.

Or

What do you know about Thoreau's attitude towards Nature ? Substantiate your answer from your study of 'Walden'.

Ans. Thoreau was a prophet of nature. He was a close

observer and accurate recorder of the natural phenomena. He described Nature's varying moods and urges. He was always interested in the discovery of new kinds of facets and phases of Nature. He heard the voice of birds, the rippling of waters, the cleaving of earth and mountains, he saw the green colour of the earth and blue colours of the sky ; he joined the earth and heaven together. His Concord friend and neighbour. Ellery Channing, rightly called him "the poet-naturalist."

Thoreau as a Transcendentalist felt spiritual forces at work everywhere. He saw the whole realm of the spirit pervading the atmosphere. Nature was another name of divinity ; it was the manifestation of God on earth. Like Emerson he too believed that words are signs of natural facts, particular natural facts are symbols of particular spiritual facts ; nature is the symbol of spirit.

To Thoreau, therefore, Nature was a source of beauty, peace and privacy. That is why the pond, the dawn, the morn, the change of seasons, the sun's warmth, the birds and the trees all had for him a unique message and stirring. Morning often revealed something to him ; it was the best hour when all the wonderful events, including the attainment of true knowledge, of the world happened. It was suggestive of the beautiful dawn of wisdom. Similarly the fresh grass in spring suggests how our life though died down to its roots still puts forth blades to eternity.

His attitude towards Nature is like that of the English Romantic poets. He treats Nature with imagination and feeling. He personifies Nature several times. Watching the struggle between the black and red ants in *Walden* he says, "excited somewhat even as if, they had been men." Seeing an owl, he says, "looking out from the land of dreams, and endeavouring to realize me, vague object or mote that interrupted his visions." Here and elsewhere in his descriptions of Nature, Thoreau establishes a reciprocal relation between himself and the thing observed. This feature gives him a unique distinction in literature.

He could not be a scientific and very accurate observer of Nature, although he observed Nature all hours of the day and night, and in all seasons and weathers, year in and year out. It was so because of the fundamental difference between the scientist and the naturalist, and his habit to exaggerate. "The scientist is a disinterested observer ; Thoreau is always interested. The scientist must be objective ; Thoreau is often subjective, mingling his feelings in his record The scientist is factual ; Thoreau enters areas where fact is unattainable, and speculation is scientifically unprofitable."

Many a time Thoreau sought an escape in the lap of Nature.

He had a passion for Nature. **Sanborn** observes : "he was sometimes secluded in his hut for days together."

The precious flow r of Thoreau's communion with Nature was his book *Walden* in which, as mentioned by Emerson, he describes minutely and vividly the fields, hills and waters of his native town, the river on whose banks he was born and died. He describes the fishes, the conical heaps of small stones on the river shallows, the huge nests of small fishes, the birds which frequent the stream, heron, duck, sheldrake, loon, osprey, the snake, muskrat, woodchuck and fox, the tustle, fog, hyla and cricket which make the bank vocal. "And he knew the river, so the ponds in this region."

In Emerson's opinion, "He remarked that the Flora of Massachusetts embraced almost all the important plants of America—most of the oak, most of the willows, the best pines, the ash, the maple ; the beech, the nuts." He was the attorney of the indigenous plants ; he knew their low names such as Pigweed, Wormwood, Chickweed, Shad-blossom ; he knew their brave names too—Ambrosia, Stellaria, Amelauchier, Amarnath, etc.

Thoreau's descriptions of nature are very sensuous. "His power of observation seemed to indicate additional senses. He saw as with microscope, heard as with ear-trumpet and his memory was a photographic register of all he saw and heard. And yet none was a photographic register of all he saw and heard. And yet none knew better than he that it is not the fact that imports, but the impression or effect of the fact on your mind."

Thus Thoreau was a deep lover of Nature. He was keenly interested in birds, fishes, animals, trees, plants, flowers, rivers, ponds, rocks, woods, greenery and fields. In a word, he was a Prophet of Nature. This love of Nature is revealed not only in his prose but also in his poetry, for example :

Light-winged Smoke, Icarian bird
Melting thy pinions in thy upward flight,
Lark without song, and messenger of dawn,
Circling above the hamlets as they nest......

—"*Smoke*"

Or

Direct thy pensive eye
Into the western sky ;
And when the evening star
Does glimmer from a far
Upon the mountains line ;
Accept it for a sign
That I am near ;
And thinking of thee here
I'll be thy Mercury,
Thou Cytherea to me... —"*To the Maiden in the East.*"

Q. 33. Write a note on Thoreau as a social rebel or a critic of American society.

Or

Was Thoreau a minor eccentric ?

Ans. Thoreau was an idealist. Though he invited people to the lap of Nature and to improve society, he was a social rebel and a critic of American society. He was every time ready to do any work for the community. He was no loafer and no parasite. He believed in economy and simplcity, and discarded show and pomp and extravagancy. He did not like the business-minded people, or the commercial spirit. For the same reason, he opposed his fellow townsman Henry Vose.

Thoreau knew that man's strongest passion was the collection of wealth. It was this passion which made man blind to the beauties of Nature. He advocated for the necessity for the readjustment of the proportion of labour to leisure. He liked a synthesis of science and Nature. He thought that the pursuit of wealth was a kind of enslavement. It was 'a mere postponement of death.' So he was interested in the "practical side of living". He said that the way out of the slough in which our civilization has fallen lies through simplification. So he recommends simplicity and economy as the golden rules of a good and happy living. He preferred the individual to society.

Interviewing a day labourer, named John Field, Thoreau observes : "But the only true America is that country where you are at liberty to pursue such a mode of life as may enable you to do without these (tea, coffee, and meat) and where the state does not endeavour to compel you to sustain the slavery and war and other superflous expenses which directly or indirectly result from the use of such things."

He believed in the morality of sex. Love is, he says, tainted by contact with any third party He held high ideals about man-woman relationship. about sex, marriage, etc. In fact, as stated by John T. Read, "Thoreau wrote *Welden*, one of America's most candid, honest and beautiful attempts to penetrate the layers of falsity and superficiality,which surround most of our civilized lives, and to see clearly those basic, divine things that make us humans, and not animals. I have recently re-read *Welden*, and I find it ju t as stimulating as I did when I was in the first year of the University over thirty years ago."

However, there is a note of eccentricity too in Thoreau. He thinks post offices useless and newspapers a nuisance. These are only some of the bright and shining blades with which he rips the canvas of life. Almost every page of *Walden* is a challenge to tradition, and every chapter in his life was a riot of militant independence. He wages war against the fashions of the day in clothes, the style in furniture and architecture. He reduces life to its simplest elements, food, shelter, and a few books.

He declared war against the State in "Civil Disobedience". In *Slavery to Massachusets* he l unched an attack to destroy the corrupting institutions. He was against slavery too. He wanted to have a social set-up in which the individual would not be suppressed but have an opportunity for development.

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Q. 34. Write a critique of Thoreau's ' Walden." Also discuss Thoreau's symbolism in 'Walden".

Ans. Henry David Thoreau's ***Walden : Or, Life in the Woods*** is his best work. It was published in 1854. It is one of the two books published in Thoreaue's life time, the other being *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* In the words of R. E. Spiler "Henry's devoted love of life at the Pond and in Concord township his intense religious feeling for nature, his protest at the waste of life through misdirection by the code of the mercantile system, his feeling for his friends, his inrerest in men---all this and more enter into *Walden*."

Walden is the immortal record of Thoreau's stay at Walden Pond for two years, two months, and two days. It is the description of his rich and elemental experience. It is an American classic. It is an autobiography of a mind and body in co-operation enjoying fullness of living.

The Structure of 'Walden'

'Walden' consists of eighteen chapters in all They are 'Economy', 'Where I Lived and What I Lived For', 'Reading', 'Sounds', 'Solitude', 'Visitors', 'The Bean field', 'The Village', 'The Ponds', 'Baker Farm', 'Higher Laws', 'Brute Neighbors', 'House-Warming', 'Former Inhabitants', 'Winter Visitors', 'Winter Animals', 'The Pond in Winter', 'Spring', and 'Conclusion'. It is a record of life spent in summer, winter and spring. It is thus a record of a man's whole life ; a year is a symbol of full life of man.

The Theme of 'Walden.

Walden is structured cn an elaborate metaphor of a traveller, who explores the very ground he moves on. It describes a practical expression to discover how far "the higher potentialities of a human being can be developed, when one lives deliberately." The evolution is a spiritual evolution. The recurring theme is that of 'spiritual awakening' It appears in metaphor in almost every chapter, the commonest symbols being those of spiring, morning and the sun. The seasonal change from winter to spiring is symbolic of 'the awakening of the human being to self-realization, well being, and development.'

The first chapter of Walden is 'Economy'. In it Thoreau discusses the best method of arranging the practical circumstances of one's life to reap the maximum advanta e. He terms it "that economy of living which is synonymous with poilosophy." To Thoreau philosophy is a means of shaping one's way of life, not mere idle speculation. In *Walden*, Thoreau says that man has to work to provide himself with food, clothing, shelter, frunishings, and social entertainment, but he must do it with utter simplicity and with as little effort as possible, so that he should have enough leisure to understand reality The whole moral life of man and the strength of his knowledge are built on his practical dependence on nature, which is the real source of man's spiritual consciousness and inspiration. '*Walden* is the truest expression of this consciousness. It begins with a practical plan for ordering one's life, and it ends with an enthusiastic predication of the results one may expect '

The most important portion is the second chapter, "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For." It is the most representative essay of Thoreau. It is here he teaches the lessons of simplicity. It has three distinctive features : (1) the morning-image is dominant, (2) references to Hindu thought and tradition are frequently used, and (3) love of simplicity and love of Nature abound in it.

Examine some of Thoreau's observations: "I do not propose to write an ode to dejection. but to brag as lustily as chanticler in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake my neighbours up." "Morning is when I am awake and there is a dawn in me. Moral reform is the effort to throw off sleep." Quoting from the *Vedas*, he says : "The Vedas say, 'All intelligence awake with the morning'." A man should be simple both inwardly and outwardly. He may be simple by economising his pocket and also conduct. This is the burden of the first chapter in *Walden*. In the second chapter he pronounces : "Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity." So he asks us "Simplify, simplify." And both simplicity and Nature provide man with a means suitable to escape into the realm of 'other worldliness' and Truth.

Symbolism in "Walden"

Thoreau's name will always be associated with Walden Pond where he carried on his famous experiment in living. It is his landscape like Yeats ; it is symbolic of some spiritual condition. It was a fit place of his contemplation and giving spurt to his imagination. It is Thoreau's Byzantium ; a simbol of art and spiritual awakening. Time and space do not touch it, nor can they stale it. In the words of Thoreau himself, the Pond is "a gem of the first water which Concord wears in her coronet." Thus the Walden Pond represents a state of unchanging perfection comparable to Balke's Jerusalem, Keats' Grecian Urn, Yeats' Byzantium.

The Pond forms the central, key image in *Walden*. It is "the keystone of the arch of Walden's absolute form." It also completes the first half of Walden's exposi ion and marks an important shift to the second half. It invites the readers to think poetically rather than logically. It gives us a window to look into the world of Nature. It reminds us of the seasonal renewal from the muddy, mundane, to the pure, solitary life, a life cleansed by regular change and reflecting heaven "The Village" another chapter in *Walden* identifies "Walden Pond" as the vital centre. "It is earth's eye, looking into which the beholder measures his own nature." It is not a shallow pond ; it is a deep one, for shallowness is symbolic of man's shallowness of mind and depth represents his intellectual and spiritnal depth. Thoreau says, "Yet the Pond is so remarkable for its depth and purity as to merit a particular description."

The colour of Walden Pond is Thoreau's personal frontier between the natural and the divine. "Walden is blue at one time and green at another, even from the same point of view lying between the earth and the heavens, it partakes of the colour of both." Walden, is thus, green like the earth and blue like the sky.

Another symbol is that of the sun which is a token of rebirth and end of mist, smoke and darkness Death is symbolised by winter. Thoreau's link with the Pond is nowhere expressed so sincerely as in the following sentences : "It is continually receiving new life and motion from the sky." The "rise and fall of Walden at long intervals" serves to purify the shore regularly. It takes away the shrubby growth on the bank since the last rise—"pitchpines, birches, alders, aspens, and others—and falling again, leaves an unobstructed shore " This sentence has deeper symbolic meaning. Thoreau means to say that man's spirit, which is sometimes overpowered with material wants, finally "emerges triumphant by rejecting the infringement of the material."

The myth of birth, death and rebirth is made clear in the final section. Thoreau starts with Walden Pond and then takes a South Western sweep across Concord from Flint's Pond to Goose Pond to Fair Heaven.

Walden, says **Norman Holmes**, "is an extended metaphor of living." The cabin itself may stand for a withdrawal from the world. But it is not a hermit's retreat, or an escape from the world. It is a withdrawal perhaps necessary for the accomplishment of some private business. To quote **R. Stewar** and **D. Bethurum**, "There is the large, overall allegory, and there are the particular, subordinate allegories" in *Walden*. "*Walden*, its serenity and grandeur unimp ired, still lifts us up by the ears, still translates for us that language we are in danger of forgetting "which all things and events speak without metaphor, which alone is copious and standard."

Walden is "like an invitation to life's dance." It "stirs one as a young girl is stirred by her first big party bid. Many think it a sermon; many set it down as an attempt to rearrange society; some think it an exercise in nature-loving; some find it a rather irritating collection of inspirational puffballs by an eccentric show-oil. I think it none of these. It still seems to me the best youth's companion yet written by an American, for it carries a solemn warning against the loss of one's valuables, it advances a good argument for travelling light and trying new adventures, it rings with the power of positive adoration, it contains religious feeling without religious images, and it steadfastly refuses to record bad news. Even its pantheistic note is so pure as to be uncorrupting-pure as the flute note blown across the pond on those far away summer nights. If our colleges and universities were alert; they would present a cheap pocket edition of the book to every senior upon graduating, along with his sheepkin, or instead of it......

"If Thoreau had merely left us an account of a man's life in the woods. or if he had simply retreated to the woods and there recorded his complaints about society, or even if he had contrived to include both records in our essay, "Walden", would probably not have lived a hundred years. As things turned out, Thoreau very likely without knowing quite what he was up to, took man's relation to nature and man's dilemma in society and man's capacity for elevating his spirit and he beat all these matters together, in a wild free interval of self-justification and delight, and produced an original omelette from which people can draw nourishment in a hungry day. *Walden* is one of the first of the vitamin enriched American dishes. If it were a little less good than it is, or even a little less queer, it would be an abominable book. Even as it is, it will continue to baffle and annoy the literal mind and all those who are unable to stomach its capricies and imbine its theme. Certainly the plodding economist will continue to hage rough going if he hopes to emerge from the book with a clear system of economic thought. Thoreau's assault on the Concord society of the mid-nineteenth century has the quality of a modern Western; he rides into the subject at top speed, shooting in all directions. Many of his shots richochet and nick him on the rebound, and throughout the melee there is a horrendous cloud of inconsistencies and contradictions, and when the shooting dies down and the air clears, one is impressed chiefly by the courage of the rider and by how splendid it was that somebody should have ridden in there and raised all that ruckus." (E. B. White, "Walden 1954", *The Yale Review* (Summer, 1954, pp. 13-22).

Mr. White further writes, "*Walden* is his acknowledgement of the gift of life. It is the testament of a man in a high state of indignation because (it seemed to him) so few ears heard the uninterrupted poem of creation, the morning wind that forever blows........" *Walden*, therefore, is Thoreau's account of life; it

is not a simple and sincere account of a man's life; either in or out of the woods ; it is an account of man's journey into the mind, a toot on the trumpet to alert the neighbours. Thoreau wanted to alert his neighbours to the joys of Nature, and to the dangers of coming urbanization.

While writing *Walden*, Thoreau had not sought an escape from the world. In fact, he was torn by two powerful and opposing drives—the desire to enjoy the world and the urge to set the world straight. And he did the job successfully. For him a cowbell made a sweeter sound than a churchbell. *Walden* thus is "the sound of a cowbell, more than a churchbell."

Q. 35. Write a critique of Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience."

Or

Elucidate Thoreau's political ideas.

Or

Discuss Thoreau as a political thinker.

Ans "Civil Disobedience" is a summary of Thoreau's political thought ; it is a saga of his political views. It was first published in *Aesthetic Papers*, a collection of essays by Elizabeth P. Peabody, in 1849 Its original title was "Resistance to Civil Government" ; later on, it was changed to the present title, "Civil Disobedience " When it appeared first it attracted no attention. But it was Gandhi's source-book in his Indian camplaign for Civil Disobedience against the British Raj, and since then it has been read and pondered by thousands who hope to find some way to resist seemingly irresistible force. "It has been read in socialistic, capitalistic, communistic and democratic nations and has been a source of inspiration to revolutionaries." There are some who have called it only "the purest piece of Quixotic idealism."

Gandhi told Miller about this essay : "I actually took the name of my movement from Thoreau's essay, "on the Duty of Civil Disobedience", written about eighty years ago. Uutil I read that essay I never found a suitable English translation for my Indian word, *Satyagraha*. You remember that Thoreau invented and practised the idea of civil disobedience in Concord, Massachusetts, by refusing to pay his poll tax as a protest against the United States government. He went to jail, too. There is no doubt that Thoreau's ideas greatly influnced my movement in India." Gandhi also agrees with Thoreau's ideas

The essay starts with the Jeffersonian idea : "That government is best which governs least." Thoreau observes : "Yet this government never of itself furthered any enterprise, but by the alacrity with which it got out of its way. It does not keep the country

free. It does not settle the West. It does not educate." Trade and commerce, he thought, would not bouncer up under the governmental control. He did not want to abolish the government but wanted a better government. Such a government would anticipate and provide for reform, cherish for its 'wise minority', and encourage its citizens 'to be on the alert to point out its faults.' According to Thoreau, individual conscience was the sole valid guide in political action.

On the matter of voting Thoreau says, "All voting is a sort of gaining......a playing with right and wrong, with moral questions ; and betting naturally accompanies it." The majority, he says, is very slow to move towards the eradication of evils like "the abolition of slavery." But the time the majority comes to a decision, the force of the issue is gone.

Then he says that we should not support the orders of Civil Government unjustly and meanly. They who do so are "the most serious obstacles to reform." The state plays the role of 'divide and rule'. Opinion is a valuable thing ; and the very Constitution of the State is evil.

Prison is the proper place for a just person to live in under an unjust government. Thoreau prefers "the imprisonment of the offender" to "the seizure of his goods." Poverty and richness are related terms : "the more money, the less virtue."

"Some people cannot spare the protection of the existing government, and they dread the consequences to their property and families of disobedience to it." But Thoreau won't The harassment of the government is so terrible that it is impossible for a man "to live honestly." Accumulation of property will go to the government in the form of taxes. Church is another such institution of tyranny.

Then Thoreau speaks of his imprisonment for one night on account of not paying the poll-tax for six years It was, according to him, a crezy step of the government. He pitied it. The State does not know to confront a man morally or intellectually, but physically. Thoreau recalls his jailing as a "novel and interesting" event.

Thereafter we have passages describing Thoreau's own experience during the imprisonment. He tells us that he was released the next morning, for some one interfered and paid the tax

Thoreau was never unwilling to pay "the highway tax", since he was as desirous of being a good neighbour as he was of being a bad subject. He did not like others paying the tax demanded of him

In Thoreau's view the statesmen and legislators are no deep thinkers. They are far from Truth and Wisdom They stick fast to th governmental protection They are simply conformists, standing always by "the Bible and the Constitut on "

America has produced, upto the author's time, "no man with a genius for legislation" Rarely do they appear on the world-scene. There are "orators, politicians, and eloquent men." They are thousands in number. But the speaker "of freedom, of union, of rectitude" has not appeared so far. American legislators have "no genius or talents for comparatively humble questions of taxation and finance, commerce and manufactures and agriculture." Lacking these, "America would not long r tain her rank among the nations."

Finally, Thoreau thinks that the authority of government is "impure one"; and to be strictly just, "it must have the sanction and consent of the governed" It should allow the individual his property at his disposal. It should exercise "limited monarchy," and thence pass on to "democracy". In a nutshell, the individual should serve the base for the empire, as the Chin se philosopher held. Such an arrangement would help create a better Sta e, free and enlightened.

Thus "Civil Disobedience" is the most complete political theoretical statement of Thoreau's basic political assumptions. He hated slavery, and warned the government that "people must cease to hold slaves, and to make war on Mexico, though it cost them their existence as a people." Refusal to pay taxes was in Thoreau's mind, "the definition of a peaceful revolution, if any such is possible." He said that the conscience is wounded, and through this wound "a man's real manhood and immortality flew out, and he bleeds to an everlasting death. I see this blood flowing now."

"Thoreau was not, therefore, as *Walden* might suggest, and some critics have asserted, an American exponent of the Rousseau-ist doctrine of the natural rights of man. His philosophy certainly lacked the liberating drive which Rousseau's individualism had in the 18th-century French context. Thoreau's individualism was, most commentators agree, an inspired protest against the modern cult of progress, materialism and efficiency, with its deteriorating effect on the individual But it was essentially out of date, because it renounced industrialism rather than seeking to bring it under control. Thoreau's individualism could not possibly find practical application. The moral and the morality really were at odds."

What Thoreau was suggesting was not anarchy but a reform in the Government in his essay 'Civil Disobedience'. Gandhi spoke very highly of its writer : "you (the Americans) have given me a teacher in Thoreau, who furnished me through his essay on the 'Duty of Civil Disobedience' a scientific confirm tion of what

I was doing in South Africa." As a matter of fact Gandhi borrowed only the word ; his spirit he had already developed and the action in the form of passive resis'ance had already taken shape in his mind. Nevertheless, this essay "is a classic pronouncement that has been, and will continue to be, invoked, as the need may arise, in the author's own country." (R. Stewart).

So Thoreau believed in better and reformed government ; better citizenship ; freedom of the individual ; he opposed slavery; he advised people to accept only the dictates of their conscience ; he wanted a government least interfering with the individual and dispensing full justice to all m·n. He failed to understand why Governments crucified Christ, excommunicated Copernicus and Luther, and pronounced Washington and Franklin rebels. They should not have done all this. The American government of his day was only traditionally functional, and nothing more. It lacked what is called integrity aud vitality. Thoreau was critical of the rule of majority. Though not a systematic, Thoreau, thus, was unquestionably a political thinker of great courage. He never bothered about what others' opinions were, he had his own views and opinions and expressed them freely.

Walt Whitman (1819—1892)

Q. 36. How far is it proper to consider Whitman as the poet of America ?

Or

Discuss Whitman as an American spokesman.

Or

Is Whitman a true representative poet of America ? Illustrate your answer with examples from his poetry.

Ans. The response to Walt Whitman's original poetic genius has not been uniform. Some have hailed him as great, others have dismissed him as eccentric, calling his poetry no poetry at all. The intellectual critics decry his verse as full of emotionalism and vagueness ; to the formal critics his poetry is unacceptable because of its lack of close structure ; and as for the academic critics, they cannot relish his 'apotheosis' of the uncultivated. Against these critics are rallied the admirers of Whitman who see him as a seer, a mighty prophet and a liberator of poetry. In the midst of these varied opinions, one factor remains steadily recognized—Whitman is undoubtedly the poet of America. No other poet has a better claim to be deemed the 'organ voice' of America as Whitman.

Whitman is deeply patriotic. W. M. Rossetti* calls the *Leaves* "the poem of American nationality" and adds : "He (Whitman) is altogether and profoundly in sympathy with the predominant temper and aims of the predominant nation to which he belongs. He brings a glowing mind into contact with his own time and people, and the flame from which it catches fire is Americanism." True he displays at times a flamboyant patriotism which may be distasteful to some who do not care to wear their heart on their sleeves. But though flamboyant Whitman's patriotism is nonetheless real or genuine. This showy feeling for his country was something of a family matter, for three of his brothers were christened George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson.

Whitman was proud of America, its physical vastness, its ever-expanding boundaries, its infinite natural riches, its achievements. To celebrate man and to celebrate his country were the two dominant ambitions of Whitman evinced in his poetry. It is not suprising that Whitman thought of glorifying his country in his poetry when we read what he says in "Specimen Days": "The Americans of all nations at any time upon the earth have probably the fullest poetical nature the United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem." He saw unprecedented greatness in his country.

* An English edition of *Leaves* (1867).

"Thou Mother with Thy Equal Brood," "land tolerating all." Everything about America, he loved and cherished. His poems evince a keen familiarity with the America of his day unmatched in its geographical, social, occupational range and in the precision of its detail. His long catalogues express his desire and his striving to do justice to every bit of American, every individual that forms the great people of America. The poem "I Hear America Singing" is a good illustration.

> "*I hear America singing, the varied carols. I hear*
> *Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be blithe and stroug.*
> *The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,*
> *The mason singing his as he makes ready for work or leaves off work.*"

This is followed by a long list that includes the boatman, the shoemaker, the wood-cutter, the plough-boy and so on—

> "*Each singing what belongs to him or her to none else*
> ....
> *Singing with open mouths their strong melodious song.*"

The poet in his patriotic fervour liked to think of his mother country, singing together, thriving in harmony, soaring on the wings of unity to greater and still greater heights. The civil strife that inflicted severe wounds on his beloved motherland saddened the poet. Whitman knew the horrors of war at first hand as he himself had the opportunity to work as a nurse to the wounded. His impressions are recorded in the poem, "The Wound Dresser." "Come up from the Field Father" is another poignant and fascinating poem, where Whitman's imagination captures the horror of war and the wild waste of human life it brings about. A highly dramatic scene is pictured in this short poem where the father and the mothe come up from their tasks to receive news of their son's death. The infinite sorrow that Whitman felt crystallised in these beautiful lines, full of pathos :

> "*The only son is dead.*
> *But the mother needs to be better,*
> *She with thin from presently drest in black,*
> *By day her meals untouched, then at night fitfully sleeping, often waking*
> *In the midnight waking, weeping, longing with one deep longing,.........*"

Again the profound sorrow that the nation was plunged into by the death of Abraham Lincoln finds expression in the two great elegies of Whitman : "O Captain" and "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd." The first poem draws a striking contrast

between the triumph of the nation and its severest loss in the moment of victory

> *"O Captain ! my Captain ! our fearful trip is done*
> *The ship has weather'd every rack the prize we sought is won,*
> *The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exculting*
> *While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring,!*
>
> *But O heart ! heart ! heart !*
> *O the bleeding drops of red,*
> *Where on the deck my Captain lies,*
> *Fallen cold and dead."*

The great national loss and the anguish caused by it are desdribed in the exquisite "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom's," where the poet speaks of the great "bright Western Star" Lincoln whose death will be mourned by the poet with every coming of spring.

> *"Ever-returuing spring, trinity sure to me you bring*
> *Lilac blooming perennial, and drooping star in the west,*
> *And thought of him I love."*

The poem is the chant of the poet's soul twining with Lilac and the star and the bird song to keep the memory of "the sweetest wisest soul of all my days and lands." The deep sorrow that thus finds poetic expression makes Whitman the spokesman of the entire America that was plunged into sorrow by the death of the national hero, Linclon As sharers of a common grief America showed a unity which Whitman has grasped and expressed in the two immortal elegies.

In poem after poem Walt Whitman exhorts his countrymen to stay united. It would appear that his life's purpose as a poet was that of bringing about the unification of America. Again and again he made use of the phrase "the dear love of comrades" which a one could steer the great ship of America along the right course In "I hear it was charged Against Me," Whitman vindicates himself from the charge that he sought to destroy institutions. He says that it was not what he sought. His aim was far different. He puts it thus :

> *"Only I will establish in the Manahatta and in every city of the states inland and seaboard*
> *And in the fields and woods and above every keel little or large that dents the water,*
> *Without edifice or rules or trustees or any argument,*
> *The institution of the dear love of comrades"*

All the poems that are included in the 'Calamus' group are a brilliant poetical plea for unity and comradeship. The title 'Calamus' is itself significant. The plant of this name with its

close-knit blades symbolizes the mutual support gained from comradeship. In 'One's self I Sing' Whitman says :

> "*I will plant companionship thick as trees along all the rivers of America and along the shores of the great lakes and all over the prairies,*
> *I will make inseparable cities with their arms about each other's necks*
> *By the love of comrades*
> *By the manly love of comrades*"

In "Thou Mother of Thy Equal Brood" Whitman sounds the note of optimism urging his country to rise and triumph over all the ugly memories of the civil war and face the prospect of greatness ahead.

> "*The storm shall dash thy face ; the murk of war and worse than war shall cover the all over,*
> ....
> *But thou shalt face thy troubles, thy diseases and surmount them all,*
> *Whatever they are today and whatever thro' time they may be......*"

The poet wants the American nation to keep looking ahead, for the future is full of infinite promises.

> "*The present holds thee not for such vast growth as thine*
> *For such unparall'd flight as thine, such brood as thine*
> *The future only holds thee and can hold thee.*"

This grandiose conception of the future of America is expressed also in such poems as "Turn O Liberated", "Thick Sprinkled Bunting," "Pioneers, O, Pioneers," 'Passage to India" and "To a Locomotive in Winter." "Pioneers, O, Pioneers" celebrates the Westward movement, catching the spirit of the pioneers admirably in the metaphor of the marching army and in the heavily cadenced rhythms of its regular trochaic measure.

In Whitman we find much that strikes us as contradiction. There is, as **Richard Chase** points out a contradiction between his conservatism and his radicalism, his passion for taking people enmasse and his fierce individualism. These contradictions are extremely common among Americans and is a national characteristic. ' Do I contradict myself ? Very well then I contradict myself (I am large, I contain multitudes)." Even in the poet's ambiguities and ironies, his boastfulness and vaunting Americanism, we detect factors that make him the spokesman of the nation.

Whitman's burning individualism, his passionate love of liberty, his dedication to Democracy are the very features that set

apart the American temperament from that of the rest of the world. It is not true that Whitman envisaged America as a socialist state. To him America is and always should be a nation of free individuals. He loved the phrase 'enmasse' but his fierce exaltation of the individual was even greater than that of Emerson.

> *"One's-self I sing a simple separate person,*
> *Yet utter the word Democratic, the word En-masse."*

Finally one factor that makes Whitman indisputably American is his breaking away from the conventions and traditions of English verse It is in Whitman's verse that we find the complete fulfilment of Emerson's famous declaration of America's intellectual independence. In 'Thou Mother'' Whitman expresses his resolve to discard a diction that it is not purely American, a verse pattern that is still based on foreign models.

> *"The conceits of the poets of other lands I'd bring thee not,*
> *Nor the compliments that have served their turn so long*
> *Nor rhyme, nor the classics nor perfume of foreign*
> *Court or indoor library."*

Instead he offers her the odour from forests of pine in Maine

> *or breath of an Illinois praire*
> *with open airs of Virginia or Georgia or Tennessee or*
> *from Texas uplands or Florida's glades ;*
> ....
> *And murmuring under, pervading all I'd bring*
> *the rustling sea-sound*
> *That endlessly sounds from the two Great Seas of the world.*

Hence his poems are the result of his resolve to celebrate America in what he decided was appropriate form. "Behold in *Leaves of Grass* the immense and absolute sunrise ! It is all our own ! The nation is in it ! In form a series of chants, in substance it is an epic of America. It is distincivtely and utterly American. Without model, without imitatton, without reminiscence, it is evolved entirely from one polity and popular life. Look at what it celebrates and contains hardly to be enumeraed without sometimes using the powerful, wondrous phrases of its author, so indissoluble are they with the things described The essence, the events, the objects of America, the myriad varied landscapes, the teeming and giant cities, the generous turbulent population—the whole gigantic epic of our continental being unwinds in all its magnificent reality in these pages. To understand Greece, study the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, study *Leaves of Grass* to understand America." (W. D. O'Connor) [1] In the words of John Burroughs

1 W. D. O'Connor, *The Good Grey Poet.*

too, the *Leaves* contain all things characteristically American (trades, tools, occupations, productions, characters, scenes); "It is indeed to be a complete mirror of the times in which the life of the poet fell......"[1]

Walt Whitman's enthusiasm for his country has evoked the ridicule of certain American writers too. Sidney Lanier once said that the point of Whitman's argument seems to be that "Because a prairie is wide, therefore debauchery is admirable and because the Mississippi is long therefore every American is God." But it would be a grievous injustice to assume that Whitman was blind to the defects of his country. His prose writings provide ample evidence to prove that he was only too keenly aware of the vulgarity and corruption that was everywhere His book 'Democratic Vistas' is a scatching attack upon American complacency which is even more detestable to Whitman that it was to Carlyle. He even characterises his beloved New York City, as a flippant, infidel, unwholesome, mean-mannered. He criticises America fiercely for its fatal deficiency, namely its lack of a national literature. "America has yet morally and artistically originated nothing," he writes, "What is the reason our time, our lands, that we see no fresh local courage, sanity, and physical facts, southerners etc. in the body of our literature especially the poetic part of it." Instead of confining himself to criticism, Whitman gives positive suggestions, leading to this conclusion. "America demands a poetry that is bold, modern but inspires itself with science and the modern. It must bend its vision towards the future, more than the past." Curiously enough Whitman's poetry does all this and out of the vision bent towards the future proceeds this optimistic prediction of the coming of an artistic and moral growth, expressed in "Thou Mother with Thy Equal Brood":

> *"Thee in thy own musicians, singers, artists,*
> *Unborn yet, but certain*
> *Thee in thy moral wealth and civilization*
> *(Until which thy proudest civilizations must remain in vain)*
> *I prophesy."*

Q. 37. "Leaves of Grass" is to be considered as a monument in American poetry. Why?

Ans In 1776, sixty years after America's Declaration of Independence, Emerson gave in England a speech, *The American Scholar* which came to be referred to as the Nation's Intellectual Declarations of Idependence. "Our day of dependence" Emerson

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1 John Burroughs, *Whitman, A Study* (1896).

said, "our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands draws to a close. The millions that around us are rushing into life connot always be fed on the sere remains of foreign harvests." In words of passionate intensity he described the new art and poetry that he had envisaged for the future. "I read with some joy of the auspicious signs of the coming days, as they glimmer already through poetry and art, through philosophy and science, through church and state.................... I ask not for the great, the remote, the romantic; what is doing in Italy or Arabia; what is Greek art, or Provencal minstrelsy; I embrace the common, I explore and sit at the feet of the familiar, the low." The spirit of Emerson's words was realised in the works of Walt Whitman and the mighty Emersonian prophecy was fulfilled when in 1855 *The Leaves of Grass* appeared with twelve un-titled poems and a preface explaining the poet's view of poetry and its purpose. It is not surprising that Emerson should have at once recognized in the book promise of all that he had envisaged for American poetry. His letter to Whitman praising the book remains a document proving Emerson's critical acumen and his prophetic insight and his rare ability to detect enduring qualities in a work of art. "Dear Sir", wrote Emerson, 'I am not blind to the worth of the wonderful gift of 'Lesves of Grass.' I find it the most extraordinary piece of wit and wisdom that America has yet contributed. I am very happy in reading it as great power makes us happy.........I give you joy of your free and brave thought......I find incomparable things said incomparably well. I find the courage of treatment which so delights us, and which large perception only can inspire. I greet you at the beginning of a great career."

Emerson's enthusiasm about *Leaves of Grass*, did not, however represent the general attitude to the book. The book was laughed at and the author scorned. To some extent Whitman was responsible for the hostility that the people felt towards the book for he provoked the orthodox and conservative people by deliberately elaborating the sexual implications of the work. Writing about his work, Whitman stated: "Sex will not be put aside, it is the great ordination of the universe. He (Whitman himelf) works the muscle of the male and the teeming fibre of the female throughout his writings as wholesome realities......Right and left he flings his arms, drawing men and women with undeniable love to his close embrace, loving the clasp of their hands, the touch of their necks and breasts and the sound of their voices. All else seems to burn up under his fierce affection for persons." While this statement actually shows one of the greatest merits of the book, namely its clebration of humanity, it was not taken in that light by Whitman's contemporaries. The leading journals were all relentlessly hostile. "The book is an impertinence toward the English language; its sentiment is an affront upon the recognized morality of respectable people," wrote the *Christian Examiner*. Another review ran thus: "We leave this

gathering of muck to the laws, which, certainly, if they fulfil their intent must have power to suppress such obscenity" A still more vicious tone was added by *Boston Intelligencer* which declared *The Leaves of Grass* "this heterogeneous mass of bombast, egotism, vulgarity, and nonsense." It added "The beastliness of the author is set forth in his own description of himself, and we can concieve no better reward than the lash for such a violation of decency as we have before us............The author should be kicked from all decent society as below the level of a brute. There is no wit or method in his di jointed babbling, and it seems to us he must be some escaped lunatic raving in pitiable delirium." If the work was described thus in Whitman's own country, the reaction it evoked in England was no less unfriendly. *The London Critic* wondered : "Is it possible t'at the most prudish nation in the world will accept a poet whose indecencies stink in the nostrils ?", and then goes on to assert "Walt Whitman is as unacquainted with art as a hog is with mathematics" In the midst of all this sneering and scorn, was Emerson's prophecy meaningless ? It was certainly fulfilled, but not for many years.

The first signs of general recognition of the greatness of *Leaves of Grass* came from Puritan New England. **Charles Eliot Norton** described the book as "A curious and lawless collection ....neither in rhyme nor in blank verse, but in a sort of excited prose broken into lines without any attempt at measure or regularity.........", but he declared the book "a new light in poetry." Another prominent spokesman, **Edward Everett Hale** admitted : "one reads and enjoys the freshness simplicity and reality of what he reads, just as the tired man, lying on the hil side in summer, enjoys the leaves of grass about him.........There are in this curious book, little thumbnail sketches of life—which, as they unfolded one after another, strike us as real, so real that we wonder how they came on paper." It took the world some time to arrive at a full realisation of the greatness of this extraordinary book of poems by an extraordinary man.

The first significant thing about the book is its title. It was not for nothing that Whitman called his book, *Leaves of Grass*. No other title could have been more eloquent for a book of poems written by a man with burning democratic convictions The democratic hedbage Whitman identified with the American spirit and true to the title, *The Leaves of Gra·s* celebrates all that is democratic, common and lowly. His rhapsody of the grass in *Song of Myself* is important.

A child said what is the grass ? fetching it to me with full hands,

How could I answer the child ? I do not know what it is my more than he ;

I guess it must be the flag of my dispositions, out of hopeful green stuff woven.
Or I guess it is the hankerchief of the Lord,
A scented gift and remembrances designedly dropt,
Bearing the owner's name someway in the corners, that we may see and remark and say (whose)?
Or I guess the grass is itself a child, the produced babe of the vegetation,
Or I guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic,
And it means, sprouting alike in broad zones and narrow zones,
Growing among black folks as among white,
Kanuck, Tuckahoe, Congressman, Cuff, I give them the same I receive them the some.
And now it seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of graves.

It was in keeping with the spirit of democracy expressed in these lines that Whitman advertised himself as 'beloved by the illiterate'. His conception of a poet's task was also coloured by his democratic spirit. He thought that the poet's function was more than making beautifully contrived verses. The poet promulgates the future and for democracy and the poet's aim is to cheer up slaves and horrify despots, for of all mankind the great poet is the equable man. It is ironic that the very 'En-Masse' for whom Whitman wrote his great work failed to take in its greatness. There is much truth in the words of Santayana that Whitman appeals only to the dilettanti. But this does not mean that Whitman's stature as a poet was anything less than colossal or that *The Leaves of Grass* is less than monumental.

With astounding accuracy Whitman's poetry fulfilled many of the prophecies that Emerson had earlier made. Emerson had concluded his great speech *The American Scholor* with the words: "We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe. The spirit of American free man is already suspected to be timid, imitative, tame... ...Not so, brothers and friends, please God, ours shall not be so We will walk on our own feet; we will work with our own hands; we will speak with out own minds." This is more emphatically restated in Whitman's *Song of the Expositions*

Come Muse migrate from Greece and Iona,
Cross out please those immensely overpaid accounts,
That matter of Troy and Achilles' wrath, and Aeneas', Odysseus' wanderings.
Placard "Removed" and "To Let" on the rocks of your snowy Parnassus,
For know a better fresher, busier sphere, a wide, untired domain awaits, demands you.

These words indicate the programme that Whitman had chalked out for himself. He liberated the spirit of modern poetry from ancient fetters and made it embrace a wide range of things and subjects and enfold at once, the cosmic and the commonplace. It is *Leaves of Grass* that contains the first truly modern poems in American literature. In repudiating the conventional, genteel and romantic poetry of Whitman's day, this work made modern poetry possible. Its greatest value lies in the assumption that all experience, and not just those hitherto considered 'poetical' or 'proper' are capable of poetic treatment. The lengthy catalogues that appear repeatedly in the book serve to prove this point. Casting aside all Puritan restraint, the book also celebrates the body, thus launching a campaign to assert the claims of the body along with those of the soul. "I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet of the Soul" declares Whitman.

Technically too, the *Leaves of Grass* marked the beginning of a new era. Whitman himself considered the book as a language experiment, affirming his theory that poetry should be based on the colloquial tone, and that it should make use of the voice of the people. This is why several modern poets have looked up to the *Leaves of Grass* as a kind of poetic Bible. For example the poet William Carlos Williams writes about the book thus: "It was a good title for a book of poems, especially for a new book of American poems. It was a challenge to the entire concept of the poetic idea, and from a new view point, a rebel view point, an American view point. In a word, and at the beginning it enunciated a shocking truth, that the common ground is of itself a poetic source. There had been inklings before this that such was the case in the works of Robert Burns and the poet Wordsworth, but in this instance the very forms of the writing had been altered, it had gone over to the style of the words as they appeared on the page. Whitman's so-called "free verse" was an assault on the very citadel of the poem itself; it constituted a challenge to all living poets to show cause why they should not do likewise. It is a challenge that still holds good after a century of vigorous life during which it has been practically continuously under fire but never defeated."

The trumpet tones of individualism that one hears in *The Leaves of Grass* were unknown in American poetry, though Emerson had voiced a mild doctrine of individualism. Nowhere in American Literature before Whitman do we hear the proud individualism of *Leaves of Grass* :

> *The spotted hawk swoops by and accuses me, he complains of my gab and my loitering.*
> *I too am not a bit tamed, I too am untranslatable,*
> *I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.*

But Whitman is more than an individual voice. His book is the

voice of the nation. As **Richard Chase** points out "he incarnates its (the American Nation's) geography and natural life and rivers and lakes." But more than that, the poet, seeing "the beauty and sacredness of the demonstrable," abandons the conventional myths of traditional poetry and shapes 'solid and beautiful forms of the future,' "providing his country men...... with native archetypes of the imagination and modes of instinctive response and feeling which will give coherence to a new and still unformed civilization?"

Every bit of the book *The Leaves of Grass* evinces a great urgency, an onward-going movement "the tempo and forward thrust of a half-idealistic half-materialistic, but ever-expanding America. In *Leaves of Grass* poetry discovered also a hitherto little treated subject. Lines like these :

> *The blab of the pave, tires of carts, stufi of boot-soles, talk of the promenaders,*
> *The heavy omnibus, the driver with his interrogating thumb, the clank of the shod horses on the granite floor,*

recapture the essence of life in the city. Whitman's book also celebrates the innumerable vistas that science was opening out to man. No technical achievement failed to arouse the keen interest of the poet and this interest has found its way to the 'dear book !' The book eulogises the spirit of expansion represented by the Pioneers and sings about the fierce-throated beauty of the Locomotive.

Though there are passages in the book where the style of Whitman gets too prosy or poetic inspiration weak, yet the greatness or power of the book as a whole is undeniable. Its stature is described by another poet and critic **Louis Unterneyer** thus : "*Leaves of Grass* is admittedly uneven, ungainly, even shapeless; but it is monumental, a mountainous book. It is not a single towering eminence but a series of uneven ranges. If some of the depths seem to descend below sea-level, the heights are dazzling with peaks whose attitudinous grandeur has seldom been surpassed. Moreover, the book is the man. From it Whitman emerges a challenging and controversial figure, enigmatic, rough hewn, and lopsided, but a titan in his times and in our own."

———

Q. 38. Write a critique of "Leaves of Grass".

Or

On the basis of "Leaves of Grass" discuss Whitman as philosopher, propagandist, humorist, and poet.

Ans. The total effect of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* has been compared to that of a symphony, with interwoven and

reccurring themes that are scored for a full orchestra, from gentle strings to rancous brass ; Whitman's work seems closer to a Wagnerian opera, for Wagner employs not only the great melodic themes and the contrast of soft and harsh music but also a human element, the actors and singers on the stage. And while Whitman is famed as a champion of democratic ideas, he rarely strays from the individual man or woman. Even the *en-masse* "I" of his "Song of Myself" becomes particular in the dramatic incidents of the runaway slave who is "limpy and weak" from his journey, of the woman who peeps from behind the blinds of her windows and mentally projects herself among the twenty eight young men who splash naked on the sea-shore. and of the brave captain in the sea battle who has just begun to flight. Whitman is also like Wagner in that his triumphs and failures are similar to those of the composer ; both are capable of unmatched eloquence and both fail when they become over brown and pretentious.

So broad is Whitman's scope in *Leaves of Grass* that any short discussion of his work must be divided into compartments (which may be arbitrary and incomplete) or degenerate into random comments. Because of its breadth, Whitman may be considered as four men : philosopher, propagandist, humorist, and poet.

Whitman the Philosopher

In the short poem which opens *Leaves of Grass* Whitman bluntly states the core of his philosophy :

One's-Self I Sing—a simple, separate Person ;
Yet utter the word Democratic, the word En-masse.
Of physiology from toe to toe I sing ;
Not physiognomy alone, nor brain
alone, is worthy for the muse—I say
the Form complete is worthier far :
The Female equally with the male I sing.
O Life immense in passion, pulse, and
power,
Cheerful—for freest action form'd, under
the laws divine,
The Modern Man I sing.

Having stated the paradox, the dilemma, Whitman expands upon this theme so persuasively that by the time the reader has finished the volume he accepts the paradox as reasonable and true. In the strident "Song of the open Road" Whitman seems to emphasize the individual at the expense of society, telling us to throw off all conventions and responsibilities, to strike out on our own :

Afoot and light-hearted I take to the
open road,
Healthy, free, the world before me,
The long brown path before me, leading
Wherever I choose.

. . ..

The earth—that is sufficient,
I do not want the constellations any
nearer,
I know they are very well where they
are,
I know they suffice for those who belong
to them.
Still here I carry my old delicious burdens,
I carry them, men and women ......I carry them with
me wherever I go,
I swear it is impossible for me to get rid of them.
I am filled with them, and I will fill them in return.

In "Crossing the Brooklyn Ferry", the individual merges into crowds that in turn merge with the stream of life. When Whitman examines his position in "I Hear It Was Charged Against Me" he seems to evade the paradox by proclaiming that he was nothing to do with any institution except that "of the dear love of comrades"; but the reader may reflect that these comrades are the individuals who make up a complex world society.

Many themes appear in *Leaves of Grass*. Whitman celebrates the brotherhood of man, democracy, America as a symbol of both brotherhood and democracy, and Lincoln as a symbol of the lonely individual deeply involved in humanity ; as natural outgrowths of these themes come Whitman's insistence on the 'normality' of sex, the equality of male and female, and the oneness of man with all things in the universe, from great stars to tiny ants. All these ideas are consistent with the poet's viewpoint, all a part of the primary dilemma. One of his greatest poems, "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," presents Lincoln as the solitary figure who is also the man of the people ; and when the funeral train slowly bears his body across the country, Whitman describes not only the great grief of the masses but also the mourning of the poet, the individual :

Coffin that passes through lanes and streets,
Through day and night, with the great cloud darkening
the land,
With the pomp of the inloop'd flags,
With the cities, draped in black,
With the show of the States themselves,
as of crapeveil'd women, standing,
With processions long and winding,
and the flambeous of the night,
With the countless torchess lit– with the
silent sea of faces and the unbared heads,

....

Here ! coffin that slowly passes,
I give you my sprig of lilac.

Whitman the Propagandist

In this role, Whitman, like his contemporary Whittier, seems least successful. While it is natural for a poet in a time of crisis to feel his responsibilities, to turn his talent to a cause, only rarely does he produce great poetry in so doing. The section of *Leaves of Grass* called "Memories of President Lincoln" is above the realm of propaganda and ranks with the finest elegies written in the English language ; but many of the selections in "Drum-Taps," which is concerned with the Civil War, are "forced" poems, written as if the poet felt himself compelled to comment on the events taking place. However, in a few of the war poems—such as "Come up from the Fields Father" and "Give me the Splendid Silent Sun," in which Whitman is writing about the fringes of the war—he seems more at ease and is consequently more successful.

Whitman the Humorist

This aspect of Whitman's talent is rarely recognized and almost never discussed fully. *Leaves of Grass* contains much sly humour, many passages in which the reader suspects Whitman of poetic playfulness. Although Whitman wrote no purely comical poems, he often expresses his ideas in a witty manner. In "To a Common Prostitute" he seriously accepts the girl as a part of the human scene, but surely in the last line he has his tongue in his cheek : "Till then I salute you with a significant look that you do not forget me." The first line of "Salut au Monde"—"O take my hand Walt Whitman"—and the other passages in which the poet talks to himself and makes poetry of his own name are certainly the affectation of a "character". Even the justly celebrated section in "Song of Myself" about the nature of grass can become, with a slightly unsympathetic reading, a deadpan masterpiece of comic simplicity. And Whitman's humour is intentional. In Richard Chase's *Walt Whitman Reconsidered*, the poet is quoted as having said to his Camden friends : "I pride myself on being a real humorist underneath everything else." Here is a poet who is alternately comic and serious—and sometimes both at the same time. Whitman will always be chiefly remembered as a poet of force and eloquence, a prophet of high ideals, but his wit must also be reckoned a part of his genius.

Whitman the Poet

The range of Whitman's skill in poetic technique is remarkable. In his carol in praise of death, from "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd", he creates an effect as soft as a summer night ; and in the love song of the grieving bird in "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" the music is gentle, poignant, haunting :

> "Soothe ! Soothe !
> Close on its wave soothes the wave behind,

And again another behind, embracing and lapping,
every one close,
But my love soothes not me........."

At other times he sounds his "barbaric yawp" which many casual readers have labeled the uncontrolled outpourings of an undisciplined poet. True, there are times when the repetition, the ceaseless cataloguing, the two Biblical rhythms, the artificial combination of Quakerisms and first-reader French seem hardly worth wading through; but these passages contain the flaws to be found in the collected works of any poet.

At his best Whitman is a master of precise diction. The opening twenty-two lines of "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" not only contain a stirring rhythm and a perfectly timed climax but also are characterised by an exquisite choice of words. In a much shorter poem, "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer," Whitman's form is the usual heavily accented free verse, but here again there seems hardly a word that could be changed or omitted.

Whitman has been called a "line poet" because among his many virtues is the ability to pack the memorable into a single line. Frequently these lines open his poem and he lets them double as titles: "As Toilsome I Wander'd Virginia's Woods," "Give Me the Splendid Silent Sun," "I Hear America Singing," "Goodbye My Fancy," and "I Sing the Body Electric." Whitman is so famed as the breaker of tradition, the iconoclast who broke the way for the "modern poetry" of our time, that we tend to forget his rank among the master craftsmen of English verse. Whitman underestimated himself when he said, in "Poets To Come,"

"I but write on or two indicative words for the future,
I but advance a moment, only to wheel
and hurry back in the darkness.
I am a man who, sauntering along, wilhout fully stopping,
turns a casual look upon you, and then averts his face,
Leaving it to you to prove and define it,
Expecting the main things from you."

Many of these "main things" are already fulfilled in *Leaves of Grass.*

A Critique of 'Leaves of Grass'

Leaves of Grass is a trilogy. It shows how freedom may be secured for the body through democracy, for the heart through love, and for the soul through religion. It is America's epic, its mirror and pride. It is "the most extraordinary piece of wit and wisdom that America has yet contributed" (Emerson). It is also "a work of art—sometimes turgid and muddy, sometimes flatulent,

often rhetorically moving, and occasionally of the most concentrated and flawless imaginative precision" (John Kouwenhoven) The books should be read as a whole : "who takes me, must take me whole," says Whitman. The main themes of the *Leaves* are democracy, science, life, death, sexuality, and reconciliation of contradictions.

Many scholars are prone to think that *Leaves of Grass* is merely a collection of lyric poetry, some good, some bad. There have been others who have defended Whitman's book as the embodiment of the American reality and ideal, as a superb fulfilment of all the genuine requirements of the national epic. (See Fern Nuhn, "Leaves of Grass Viewed as an Epic," *Arizona Quarterly*, VII (1951), pp. 324-38.

The structure of *Leaves* is an organic whole as the earth is. Whitman himself wrote : "My poems when complete should be a unity, in the same sense that the earth is, or that the human body (senses, soul, head, trunk, feet, blood, viscera, man-root, eyes, hair) or that a perfect musical composition is" His poems live upto this concept. *Leaves*, says Prof Miller, is pyramidal, a metaphor that seems especially apt when the comparative bulk of the three basic parts is taken into account. Part I is a bit over twice the length of part II. Part II is double the size of Part III. Part I is the New World Personality ; Part II is The Throes of Democracy, and Part III is The Way from Life to Death.

Whitman is a living document of his time. The Civil War found its clear-throated spokesman in him. The Wound-Dresser, to borrow a phrase from Whitman himself, bandaged the war-scourged nation with ointment of his profound compassion for both the North and the South, the whites and the blacks. He addressed the outcasts and hated ones :

> *O you shunn'd persons, I at least do not shun you,*
> *I come forthwith in your midst, I will be your poet,*
> *I will be more to you than to any of the rest.*

Please also see Answer to Question No. 37.

Q 39 Evaluate the poetry of Walt Whitman, accounting for his influence on the future generations of poets.

Ans. Walt Whitman (1819-1892) is acknowledged today as the greatest of American poets and one of the most original and stimulating of the poets of the world. Though his greatness was at first challenged by many and the question asked whether he has any poetic quality at all, his fame soon spread and his reputation as a great poet has been established. Whitman's influence was keenly felt after 1900 and it was during the world war period that

his popularity was at its highest. Today Whitman is loved by a vast number of admiring readers for his rugged chants, the power of his imagination and the truly democratic reach of his sympathies.

Whitman's first offer of poetry came in the form of "Leaves of Grass" published in 1855. Several times during his life time, he went on revising this volume, reissuing it with additions and alteration "Drum Taps," a collection of poems about war appeared in 1865. Later Whitman made much contribution in prose and verse in such volumes as "Passage to India" (1870), "Democratic Vistas" (1870) 'Memoranda during the war' (1875), "Specimen days and collect" (1882) "November Boughs" (1881), and "Goodbye, My Fancy" (1891). To say that these works of Whitman ushered in a revolution in literature is not the slightest exaggeration.

Whitman had definite views as to what poetry is and what the function of a poet is. In his long preface to the first edition of "Leaves of Grass" Whitman developed his theory of poets and of poetry which was to remain unchanged throughout his long literary career. Here one finds many interesting points of correspondence between Whitman's preface and Emerson's essay, "The Poet", which was published in 1844. Like Emerson, Whitman had a lofty conception of the role of the poet. In the famous pref ce to "Leaves of Grass" he says : "the greatest poet hardly knows pettiness or triviality. If he breaks into anything that was before thought small, it dilates with the grandeur and life of the universe. He is a seer...he is individual......he is complete in himself...he is not one of the chorus ...he does not stop for any regulations...... he is the president of regulation." It is very likely that Whitman had himself in mind when he said : "The American poets are to enclose old and new for America is the race of races......His spirit responds to his country's spirit...he incarnates its geography and natural life and rivers and lakes." Whitman is certainly speaking of himself when he states that known universe "has one complete lover and that is the greatest poet" The poet he said, alluding to himself, conceals his rhythm and uniformity.........not to be seen of themselves, but to break forth loosely as lilacs on a bush and takes shapes compact, as the shapes of melons or chestnuts, or pears." There is about Whitman's verse this spontaneity and the rich reflection of the fulness and variety of Nature. In this respect Whitman found his contemporary Tennyson wanting, for one misses in Tennyson "the odour of English social life......pervading the pages like an invisible scent : the idleness the tradition, the mannerisms, the stately 'ennui' ; the yearning of love, like a spinal marrow, inside of all ......the old houses and furniture.........the moldy secrets everywhere ; the verdure, the ivy on the walls, the moat, the Eeglish landscape outside, the buzzing fly in the sun inside the window pane." Anxious not to commit such a mistake Whitman has laboriously given us long catalogues which are his attempts to give expression to "the fulness and variety of Nature."

The artist, Whitman believed, should grow and develop like a natural organism and that the function of the artist is to develop a form as closely analogous as possible to organic growth ! This is the key to the theme of Whitman's longest and most personal poem "Song of Myself." Many have found fault with Whitman's loud use of 'I' in the poem. They decry it as shameless egotism. True, in its most limited significance the 'I' of the poem is Whitman himself ; but in its largest and most frequent meaning it is generic and is representative of all men. The poem shows how the 'I' is mystically and pantheistically related to all other souls. In this universal sense Whitman's soul the 'I' is but a fragment of the world-soul. This we see is very much akin to Emerson's ideal of the 'Oversoul.'

Whitman startlingly different from other poets, is yet the last of the major poets emerging from the period of romantic idealism in America. Though his poetic method is new, his characteristic ideas and attitudes link him to the past, for he is an idealist in the line of Jonathan Edwards and the transcendentalist. He has much in common with Emerson. Like the "Sage of Concord" Whitman emphasises intuition, or the mystical apprehension of truth. Hence the anti-intellectualism in his work. Like Emerson, Whitman believed that 'in himself was the solution of all his own questions"; but there was difference in their tastes, in their ways of expression Emerson discreetly hid his own ego and expressed his views under the disguise of 'the poet Osman' But Whitman boldly used the 'I' giving the world cause to consider him a prodigious egoist. But when Whitman writes,

> *"I celebrate myself ;*
> *And what I assume, you shall assume !*
> *For every atom belonging to me, as good belongs to you."*

we are actually listening to Emerson's philosophy couched in less modest and self-effasive manner.

Among the traits in Whitman's poetry that link him to American, nay, European romanticists may be mentioned first his faith in the goodness of man. Whitman was always faithful to the conviction that living is joyful and new. The only complete failure to possess the good of the earth and sun. This optimism of Whitman, he carried through with the genuine fervour of religion.

Worship of nature as benign influence was also part of the creed that W i man promulgated. To those who are familiar with the writings of the romantics, Whitman's worship of Nature will not seem as anything new or entirely original. Everything in this universe of myriad beauties is noticed and loved by Whitman for as he puts it "The known universe has one complete lover and that is the greatest poet." In 'Specimen Days' Whitman describes minutely "the plentitude of material, entire absence of art, untram-

ell'd play of primitive Nature—the chasm, the gorge, the crystal mountain stream, repeated scores, hundreds of miles—the broad handling and absolute uncramedness—the fantastic forms, bathed in trasparent browns, faint reds and greys, towering sometimes a thousand, sometimes two or three thousand feet high—at their tops now and then huge masses pois'd, and mixing with the clouds, with only their outlines haz'd in misty lilac, visible." Such minute observation was the result of reverenital love. His poems abound in endless catalogues of Nature's infinite beauty His short pieces like 'The First Dandelion' or 'A Prairie Sunset' recall the best in English nature poetry. This is how he describes the prairie sunset :

> *"Shot gold, maroon and violet dazzling silver emerald, fawn*
> *The earth's whole amplitude and Nature's multiform power consign'd for once to colors"*
> *The light, the general air possess'd by them—colors till now unknown,*
> *No limit, confine not—the western sky alone—the high meridian—North, South, all,*
> *Pure luminous color fighting the silent shadows to the last.*

Whitman's preoccupation with death links him with the grave-yard school of poets. In 'O Captain ! My Captain !", 'When Lilacs in the Dooryard Bloom'd' and 'Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking' are poems which deal with the theme of death. The two poems inspired by the death of Lincoln are two of the finest elegies written in the English language

It is however wrong to think that Whitman leaned heavily on either the romantics or the grave-yard school. His genius was far too original to let him be unduly influenced by any particular school of poetry. In fact Whitman's poetry shows a complete breaking away from European models and existing literary forms and vogue. But his originality was not confined to technique alone. He was the poet who discarded all that was hitherto thought fit subject for poetry—elegance and sentiment, themes of love and war and legends of old heroes. 'Leaves of Grass' which contains the whole body of Whitman's poetry published between 1855 and 892 is frank in statement, revolutionary in form. The very title of the poem speaks volumes about Whitman's philosophy. As William Carlos Williams has put it : "It was a good title for a book of poems, especially for a new book of America poems. It was a challenge to the entire concept of the poetic idea, and from a new view point, a rebel view point, an American view point. In a word and at the beginning it enunciated a shocking truth, that the common ground is of itself a poetic source. There had been inklings before this that such was the case in the works of Robert Burns and the poet Wordsworth, but in this instance the very forms of the writing had been altered; it had gone over to the style of the words

as they appeared on the page. Whitman's so-called 'free verse' was an assault on the very citadel of the poem itself; it constituted a challenge to all living poets to show cause why they should not do likewise. It is a challenge that still holds good after a century of vigorous life during which it has been practic lly continuously under fire but never defeated."*

Though Emerson, before Whitman had preached the doctrine of individualism, it was Whitman's trumpet voice that shouted: "I celebrate myself". He is not however to be taken literally. He "breaks down into many different selves, as the man himself wore different masks, selves searching out their true relationship with life and death, time and space, nature and the inhabitants of a democracy, sex and language." It is as if Whitman does not want to reveal himself through his poems. Geoffery Dutton expressed this idea thus: "Despite those pages of confessions, his secrets are never told. Only in his bad poems is he unmistakably there, and then only as a wrath of himself, the newspaper editor and orator thumping away at his cliches. He is more akin to Shakespeare than to those who celebrate themselves like Donne or Yeats. We know exactly how deliciously Donne's roving hand moved over the naked body of his misttress, with what a horrible delight Yeats found himself a randy old man. But Whitman, like Shakespeare, is "Both in and out of the game and watching and wondering at it", and one of his most remarkable qualities is that without projecting himself into dramatic characters with a life of their own he manages to populate 'Leaves of Grass' with a personality that is at once myriad and unmistakably individual. It is partly this fluidity of Whitman's that enables him to keep through all barriers."

Whitman has been acclaimed as the poet of America and the poet of democracy. The inspiring dream of Whitman was the unity of America, his great Mother-land. The major theme for both his poetry and prose is American democracy of which he is the great spokesman. The *Leaves of Grass* is a symbol of the democratic spirit. In his perface Whitman has said "Of all mankind the poet is the equable man" The same phrase recurs in other poems of Whitman's, like "By Blue Ontario's Shore" and it is the word 'equable' that best sums up the peculiar temper of Whitman. His theory is that pride can and should be accompanied by humility. The choice of the title 'Leaves of Grass' was meant to proclaim that democracy, that proud estate is best symbolized by the humblest of natural growths—the grass; his new man will speak in words as simple as grass. Whitman found subjects for his poetry among all sorts of people and among all conditions. The long catalogues in his poems symbolize the equalizing process of democracy. There is no greater poem in the English language,

* *An Essay on Leaves of Grass*—William Carlos Williams.

addressed to the spirit of democracy than Whitman's hymn "For You O Democracy."

"Come I will make the continent dissoluble,
I will make the most splendid race the sun ever shone upon
I will make divine magnetic lands,
With the love of comrades,
With the life-long love of comrades.
I will plant companionship thick as trees along all the rivers of America and along
the shores of the great, lakes and all over the prairies,
I will make inseparable cities with their arms about each other's necks,
By the love of comrades
By the manly love of comrades.
For you these from me, O Democracy, to serve you ma femme !
For you, for you I am trilling these songs."

The phrase "the love of comrades" is one that Wnitman loved and one that is made use of in several of his poems. It expresses better than any other single phrase Whitman's concept of the true basis of democratic society. In the poem "The Mystic Trumpeter" the poet urges the trumpeter to bring to his soul "some vision of the future"—vison of a perfect world.

A reborn race appears—a perfect world, all joy !
Women and men in wisdom innocence and health—all joy !
Riotous laughing bacchanals fill'd with joy !
War, sorrow, suffering gone—the rank earth purged ! nothing but joy left !
The ocean fill'd with joy—the atmosphere all joy !
Joy! joy! in freedom, worship, love! joy in the ecstacy of life
Enough to merely be ! enough to breath !
Joy ! joy ! all over joy !

This exultation caused by the concept of a free democratic world is the essence of Whitman's poetry. It is his upholding of the principles of democracy that makes Whitman, the poet of the common man, the spokesman of the "uncultivated."

Yet strangely enough there is some truth in the statement of Santayana that Americans do not regard Whitman as the spokesman of the tendencies of his country and that he appeals only to the "dilettanti," and that only foreigners regard him as a representative American. The common man's difficulty in appreciating Whitman springs not from his ideas but from his peculiarity of technique. Whitman discards the stock phrases that ordinary people, used to conventional and traditional poetry expect a poet

to use. His use of words picked up from French, Spanish and Sanskrit makes him rather difficult to grasp. Whitman's language though quaint has a richness of its own and his extraordinary command of language is evident in such poems as 'Song of Myself' one of the most remarkable poems ever written and one that reveals the complexity of Whitman's genius.

The modernity of Whitman is something refreshing. Though he has traits of the romantic in him, he is not forever gazing at the past He is stirred by the adventurous spirit of his time, by the spirit of expansion, immortalised in "Pioneers ! O Pioneers !', by all the scientific inventions in which America was unmistakably ahead of the rest of the world. Whitman's "To a Locomotive in Winter" displays the loving admiration with which he watches the locomotive with its "black cylindric body, golden brass and silvery steel" etc... ... He invites this "type of the modern emblem of motion and power-pluse of the continent" to come and serve the Muse.

Fierce-throated beauty !
Roll though my chant with all thy lawless music, thy swinging lamps at night,
Thy madly-whistled laughter, echoing, rumbling like an earthquake, rousing all,
Law of thyself complete ; thine own track firmly holding,
(No sweetness debonair of tearful harp or glib piano thine)
Thy trills of shrieks by rocks and hills return'd,
Launch'd o'er the prairies wide, across the lakes,
To the free skies unpent and glad and strong.

Whitman's frank exaltation of the body and his daring discusson of sex have made him unpopular with some. To Whitman there was no subject in human life which was outlawed from the realm of poetry. He denied any distinction of importance between body and soul and found unity in their mutual dependence. To him there was no distinction or cause for shame between one function of the body and another, or between the exercise of one sense or another, and all the parts of the human anatomy he held on to be equally decent, since the whole body must be in harmony with itself before the soul can properly dwell in it. He claims :

I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet of the Soul.
She pleasure of heaven are with me and the pains of hell are with me.
The first I graft and increase upon myself, the letter I translate into a new tongue.

The "Enfants d' Adam" poems have as the dominant theme—the exaltation of the body and of love. The poet stresses his bond with all men and women, the children of Adam.

O my children ! O mates !
O the bodies of you, of all men and women engirth me and I engirth them.

or again :

I sing the body electric,
The Armies of those I love engirth me and I engirth them."

One of the passages in all the poetry of Whitman's that has evoked censure is this :

I am he that aches with amorous love !
Dose the earth gravitate, does not all matter aching attract all matter ?
So the body of me to all I meet or know.

D H. Lawrence found this passage most irritating. But a study of the whole of Whitman's poetry shows that he was not just exalting the pleasure of the senses, but singing of the real life that it is not his material eyes or his material body that finally loves. His claim is that the soul achieves its identity through the act of observing, loving and absorbing concrete objects :

We realize the soul only by you, you faithful solids and fluids.

Recklessly he asks :

And if the body were not the soul, what is the soul ?

Along with love, there is another recurring theme in Whitman's poetry, a theme that he glorified—that of death. Death, he says is beautiful. His preoccupation with death has given rise to some of the finest elegies in the English language : "O Captain ! My Captain !" "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" and "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking."

Whitman's influence on future generation of poets has been tremendous. Whitman's influence is particularly noticeable in the works of poets like Lindsay, Sandburg, Hart Crane, Allan Ginsberg and Joseph Riddel. The New poetry of the second decade of the 2 th century in America owed a great deal to him. His example has led to the admittance into poetry of all topics ugly as well as beautiful, physical as well as spiritual The loose form, the free verse, the linguistic audacities, the long catalogues and the detailed lists of Whitman's poetry have all been imitated. But what is beyond the possibility of imitation is Whitman's originality and the passionate intensity and the sincerity of his verse—— the sincerity that makes him say

Comrade
This is no book
Who touches this touches a man.

He has rightly been called the liberator of poetry and the father of free-verse movement in America.

Q 40. Comment on Whitman's love of contradictions.

Ans One of the most intriguing things about Walt Whitman is his habit of self-contradiction. It has been much criticised. Whitman has sometimes been compared to Melville, whose work is full of complexities and contradictions and also to Donne and other metaphysical poets whose poetry teems with paradoxes. To the charge of his being a bundle of contradictions he replied :

Do I contradict myself ?
Very well, then I contradict myself.
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)

The first paradox about Whitman is involved in his important idea of identity. He proclaims his intention to sing about 'a simple, separate person.' But soon we find that he has left the separate person—who was anything but simple—to get blended with other persons and with the En-Masse and later to get so generalised as to be an abstraction. It is with this contradiction that *Leaves of Grass* opens.

One's-self I sing a simple separate person,
Yet utter the word Democratic, the word En-Masse.

The very title of the book *Leaves of Grass* is based on a metaphor steeped in a paradox. "In Whitman's poems," writes one of his critics, Richard Chase, "the individual identity is always identifying itself with the "En-Masse." This often becomes disconcerting and is inevitably one of the origins of the diffuseness, and lack of inner structure and dramatic tension which characterize much of Whitman's verse. For example in "Starting from Paumanok" (the piece that serves as a kind of poetic table of contents for *Leaves of Grass*), we read :

Victory, union, faith, identity, time,
The indissoluble compacts, riches, mystery,
Eternal progress, the kosmos, and the modern reports.

Intriguing perhaps, but it is far from perfectly clear what is being talked about, except that in some way in modern America the individual becomes integral in his separateness to the extent that he is absorbed into the indissoluble union of all men. Out of this paradox arises all strength and weakness of Whitman's poetry, and it is here that we must begin to look for the meaning of this poetry, rarher than in his real or fancied relation to neo-Platonism, Hegelianism, mysticism, and all the other philosophical or religious isms that Whitman scholars have so much emphasized."

The doubleness of Whitman is seen in many other respects He was forever a poseur and the roles he assumed were varied and utterly different. At times he was the optimistic, exultant celebrant of life—

> *Of Life immense in passion, pulse and power,*
> *Cheerful, for freest action form'd under the laws divine,*
> *The Modern Man I sing.*

At times the celebrant of light focuses all his attention on death and write elegiac poems with a brooding preoccupation with death. In several of his poems death figures prominently. But even his attitude to death seemed to be filled with contrary emotions. He viewed with a sense of tenderness and pathos and what Constance Rourke calls 'the finer aspects of comedy.'

> *What do you think has become of the young and old men ?*
> *And what do you think has become of the women and children ?*
> *They are alive and well somewhere,*
> *The smallest sprout shows there is really no death,*
> *And if ever there was it led forward life, and does not wait at the end to arrest it,*
> *And ceas'd the moment life appeared.*
> *All goes onward, and outward nothing collapses,*
> *And to die is different from what anyone supposed, and luckier.*

The paradox of Whitman's attitude to life and death appears in these two lines :

> *Has anyone supposed it lucky to be born ?*
> *I hasten to inform him or her it is just as lucky to die, and I know it.*

And to provide an explanation for this Whitman gives the following lines :

> *I pass death with the dying and birth with the new-wash'd babe and am not contain'd between my hat and books,*
> *And peruse manifold objects, no two alike and every, one good,*
> *The earth good and the stars good and their adjuncts all good*
> *I am not an earth nor an adjunct of an earth,*
> *I am the mate and companion of people, all just as immortal and fathomless as myself.*
> (*They do not know how immortal, but I know*)

Whitman's 'I' is at times national and at times generic. Though he is the poet of America delighting to chant the beauties of his country, he could soar beyond the bounds of nationalism

to the realm of the purely human. This is what we find in *Song of Myself* and *Children of Adam*. Once he declared that "The ambitious thought of my song is to help the forming of a nation" seemingly forgetful of his avowed purpose to transcribe 'a person.'

Whitman has admitted many times that he was aware of a certain duality within him Once he wrote in his note-book: "I cannot understand the mystery but I am always conscious of myself as two." He tried to appease himself regarding this baffling awareness by stating that the mysterious two are "My Soul and I." But his poetry expresses this duality in many other ways. In "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" Whitman makes the significant statement.

'I too knitted the old knot of contrariety.'

The contradictions of Whitman's attitude to sex have been much-discussed. In poems such as *A Woman Waits for Me*, Whitman seems to sing of the normal ardour of a hetero sexual relationship. Yet there is an abundance of evidence in his poetry to establish Whitman's leaning towards homo-sexuality His life was celiberate despite the loud and lusty sexuality of *Leaves of Grass* especially of the poems such as 'Song of Myself" and "Children of Adam." He never married and his confession to one of his admirers, an English woman, that he had six illegitimate children, is not believed by his critics and biographers. Louis Untermeyer analysing these peculiarities about Whitman s character writes "Whitman was cognizant of his peculiarity," he made a sharp distinction between "amativeness", physical love between the sexes, and "adhesiveness," which meant the capacity for friendship and "a personal attraction between men which is stronger than friendship." The "Calamus" poems celebrate this "adhesiveness" with a combination of recklessness and naivete—reckless because Whitman was more than half aware of the implications and ambiguities which lie in the poems, naive because he equated the "robust love" of men kissing each other with the natural and non-chalant salute of American friends. Part of his paragram, he told Emerson, was to glorify manly friendship as well as hetero-sexual love. Fortunately, the poet surpassed the prophet. Whitman's dual nature led him to misread the meaning of comradeship, but it equipped him with extra-sensitiveness. It added an intensified awareness of the multiform complexities of being, the infinite variation of suffering and, above all, an elemental pity and participation."

Whitman's juxtaposition of the cosmic and the commonplace sprang from his love of contradictions. He placed the cosmic and the commonplace side by side and regarded them synonymous.

I believe a leaf of grass is no less the journey work of the stars,

And the pismire is equally perfect, and a grain of sand and the egg of the wren,
And the tree-toad is a chef-d' oevre for the highest,
And the running black berry would adorn the parlors of heaven,
And the narrowest hinge in my hand puts to scorn all machinery
And the cow crunching with depress'd head surpasses any statue,
And a mouse is miracle enough to stagger sextillions of infidels.

In himself and in his poe'ry, thus Whitman evinces this contrariness. This vital factor has to be understood if we are to understand Whitman. His inner oppositions and his ambiguities too, as **Richard Chase** has pointed out "are as native to the man as to America and along with other qualities like wit, optimism, demorcatic faith and belief in the self, make him the spokesman for the tendencies of his country."

———

Q. 41. Comment on Whitman's use of his identity in his poems.

Or

Discuss "Leaves of Grass" as a piece of autobiography.

Or

"There is much less of direct concrete autobiography in 'Leaves of Grass' than in Wordsworth's 'Prelude'."—Discuss.

Ans. The critic Walter Raleigh has said "No man can walk abroad save on his own shadow", meaning thereby that a certain amount of self-revelation is part of good poetry. The lyric poet lays bare his own heart For the lyric poet acts upon the advice of the Muse to Sir Philip S!dhey "look into thy heart and write." Whitman considered his work not just partially self-revealing; he considered his book to be himself. Time and again, he assures the reader :

Comrade
This is no book, who touches this
Touches a man.

Of all the poems of Whitman the one in which he has freely and unhesitatingly sung about himself is the poem, "Song of Myself," a song of identification. This poem begins with the declaration :

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every utom belonging to me as good bolongs to you.

The poem than sets forth two principal beliefs. One is theory of universality, "of every tune and cast am I, of every rank and religion." This is illustrated by lengthy catalogues of people and things

Trippers and askers surround me,
People I meet, the effect upon me of my early life or the word and city
I live in, or the nation
The latest dates discoveries, inventions, societies, authors old and new,
My dinner, dress, associates, looks, compliments, dues,
The real or fancied indifference of some man or woman I love. etc.

The other important idea in the poem is that all things are equal in value. He claims equal importance to the body and soul and is unwilling to grant superiority to any one.

Clear and sweet is my soul, and clear and sweet is all that is not my soul,
Lack one locks both, and the unseen is proved by the seen
Till that becomes unseen and receives proof in its turn.

Whitman brought a great deal of criticism upon himself by writing lines like the following :—

"I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet of the Soul,
The pleasure of heaven are with me and the pains of hell are with me,
The first I graft and increase upon myself, the latter I translate into a new tongue
I am the poet of the woman the same as the man
And I say it is as great to be a woman as to be a man.
And I say there is nothing greater than the mother of men.

Whitman touches the acme of unconventionality when he asserts :

"I am not the poet of goodness only, I do not decline to be the poet of wickedness also
What blurt is this about virtue and about vice ?
Evil propels me and reform of evil propels me, I stand indifferent.
My gait is no fault-finders or rejecters gait,
I moisten the roots of all that has grown."

The democratic principle of the equality of all things is emphasized by Whitman in the lines.

I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of the stars.

This equalitarian doctrine is based both on the theory of evolution and on a pantheistic belief.

Professing a number of theories in which Whitman ardently believed, he at times contradicts himself. There seem to be different identities of the same man some of them irreconcilable with one another. For example he is a profound mystic, and on other occasions he is liable to shout "Hurrah, for positive."

"Song of Myself" is a unique poem of identification. Whitman sees himself as the hounded slave and the handcuffed mutineer. The poet is always identifying himself with the actor, the actress, the politician and emigrant, the sailor and the criminal. Identification with Nature, for Whitman, took such form as "a child went forth every day. And the first object he looked upon, that object he became. And the object became part of him." The secret of true personality according to Whitman is the identification of the microcosm with all things natural and external.

> *Walt Whitman, A kosmos, of Manhattan the son,*
> *Turbulent, fleshy, sensual, eating. drinking and breeding,*
> *No sentimentalist, no stander above men and women or apart from them*
> *No more modest than immodest.*

Here Whitman is underscoring the paradox that in being himself he is equal and identified with all.

More than any other poet Whitman uses the first person singular, 'I' in his poems. This has provoked furious criticism from many, who consider it a shameless expression of undridled egotism. But this charge is not entirely true. When Whitman make use of the 'I' in his poems it is not always to be taken as the exaltation or glorification of his own self. In its larger sense the 'I' is generic and is representative of all men. Thus instead of inflated egotism, what we get in Whitman's poems is a mystical and pantheistic fusion of his soul with all other soul It is here that Whitman's doctrine comes near that of Emerson's idea of the over-soul.

Every where in Whitman's poems we come across the poet's attempt at a complete blending with the richness of the universe, with everything in it. All sorts of experiences are valued by the poet for this reason. Whitman loved to mingle with crowds, for he was one of the crowd. He was himself projected in the young men, shipbuilders, cartmen, firemen, butchers, whose looks and movements were free and picturesque. He saw himself in everything, in every object animate and inanimate around him. This has contributed to the glowing vitality of Whitman's poems, which many critics including D. H. Lawrance admire greatly. But Lawrance was out of sympathy with Whitman's boast ;

"I am he that aches with amorous love." In "A Woman Waits for Me" also Whitman exalts amorous love and sings of the glory of sex, much to the disgust of many in whom the remnants of a Puritan heritage still linger. But Whitman's idea was that every function of the body is as vital as clean as any other. But when he spoke of the many women on whom "I graft the grafts of the best loved of me and America" Whitman was definitely using figurative language He himself was filled with ravulsion when women took his meaning literally and offered themselves as mothers of his perfect children.

An interesting case of Whitman's use of his identity is the poem, "Are You the New Person Drawn Toward Me ?", where he projects a certain picture of himself and then raise the doubt that this may all be an illussion.

Are you the new person drawn toward me ?
Do you think I am trusty and faithful ?
Do you see no further than this facade, this smooth and tolerant manner of me ?
Do you suppose yourself advancing on real ground toward a real heroic man ?
Have you no thought O dreamer that it may be all Maya, illusion ?

Though much is said about Whitman's singing of himself we would do well to take the warning that his critic William Carlos William gives : "The myself breaks down into many different selves, as the man himself wore different masks, selves searching out their true relationship with life and death, time and space, nature and the inhabitants of a democracy, sex and language" Geoffery Dutton rightly observes : "Despite those pages of confessions, his secrets are never told Only in his bad poems is he unmistakably there and then only as a wraith of himself, the news-paper editor and orator thumping away at his cliches He is more akin to Shakespeare than to those who celebrate themselves like Donne or Yeats. We know exactly how deliciously Donne's roving hand moved over the naked body of his mistress, with what a horrible delig t ! Yeats found himself a randy old man. But Whitman like Shakespeare. is "both in and out of the game and watching and wondering at it," and one of his most remarkable qualities is that without projecting himself into dramatic characters with a life of their own, he manages to populate 'Leaves of Grass' with a personality that is at once myriad and unmistakably individual. It is partly this fluidity of Whitman's that enables him to seep through all barriers."

Whitman the great organ voice of America, by his trumpeting of the self and by choosing for his poems titles such as 'Song of Myself', has come to be regarded as an autobiographical poet. And *Leaves of Grass* is sometimes spoken of as a poetic

autobiography. Yet one wonders, how much of self-revelation is there in these poems ? Is the *Leaves* like *The Prelude* where Wordsworth pictures the growth of a poet's mind by tracing his own life from childhood on ?

The opening lines of *Leaves of Grass* run thus :

> *One's self I sing, a simple separate person,*
> *Yet utter the word Democratic, the word En-masse*

The use of 'One-self' instead of 'Myself' ought to warn us against taking every thing that Whitman wrote as autobiographical or personal statements. But even in the celebrated 'Song of of Myself' Whitman chose not to give us much information regarding himself. The man named Walt Whitman is not to be clearly understood from the 'Song of Myself.' In fact Whitman the man is as elusive as Whitman, the poet. The poet Whitman is elusive because, while it is easy to define the qualities of the poetry of Emily Dickinson or of Wordsworth or of T.S. Eliot, it is not easy to define readily the true qualities of Whitman's poetry. It is far easier for us to express our pleasure on reading his poems.

However Walt Whitman has described *Leaves of Grass* as an autobiography—"an attempt from first to last, to put a *Person*, a human being (myself in the latter half of the nineteenth century in America) freely, fully and truly on record." But whe Whitman says that his *Leaves of Grass* represents an attempt to put a *Person* on record, it does not mean that he has put himself on record. Rather the 'Myself' of the book represents a person, a persona or a series of Personae. The book therefore is full of self-projected images which are only equivocally the 'real' Whitman. One of the strange and fascinating things about Whitman is that he was forever assuming attitudes. He was an inveterate poseur. Among the favourite poses that Whitman assumed were those of the worldly dandy of the 1840's, the somewhat Christ like carpenter and radical of the early fifties, the bearded, bluff 'Comrado' of later years, the male nurse and good gray poet of his Washington years and finally the venerable Sage of Camden. Exactly in the same way his poetry too reveals a bafflingly varied 'self'.

It is true that we learn much about the poet from his work—his faith in democracy, his glorious dreams about the future of America, his insistence of comradeship and so on His poems contain a string of his pronouncement on cultural and social issues and also the very contradictions that are at the basis of his being. But all this is a far cry from Wordsworth's frank autobiographical method in *The Prelude*. In his book *Specimen Days*, which Whitman himself described as "the most wayward, spontaneous, fragmentary book ever printed" there is a short introductory section devoted to 'memories of Whiman's young days and family background.' But even here Whitman, a professedly auto-

biographical writer says very little about himself and that part of the book remains disappointingly sketchy. To those who shake their heads puzzled and frustrated in their attempt to trap the man's personality, there is Whitman's confession, that he did not understand himself. In his poem 'As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life,' he writes :—

O baffled, balk'd, best to the very earth,
Oppressed with myself that I have dared to open my mouth
Aware now that amid all that blab whose echoes recoil upon me I have not once had the least idea who or what I am,
But that before all my arrogant poems the real Me stands yet untouch'd, untold, altogether unreached.

And we have to be thankful for Whitman's transcending of the 'merely personal', which must occur if poetry is to be 'created.' As Constance Rourke has pointed out, what is great about Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* is not that it is self-revealing or autobiographical but that "for the first time in American literature, perhaps for the first time in all literature, he created a generic and inclusive 'I', who embraces many minds and many experiences."

Q. 42. Comment on the technical innovations of Whitman.

Ans The appearance of Walt Whitman's "Leaves of Grass" ushered in a significant era in the history of American poetry. It was as momentous an event as the appearance of the "Lyrical Ballads." The language that poetry should have has always been a fertile ground for controversy. Whether it should be 'language such as men do use'—the language of the common man or the traditional diction of poetry, has been a much-discussed question. Whitman's intention in writing poetry was to reform both the form and the content of poetry. His frank talk of sex and his grandiose egoism appeared shocking to many readers. But the form of his poetry was even more unconventional and daringly novel. Whitman called the *Leaves* a 'language experiment'.

Whitman had very definite ideas about the function of the poet and poetry is clear from his prose writing, especially his preface to 'Leaves of Grass' which like Wordsworth's preface to the 'Lyrical Ballads' is indeed a literary menifesto. He had two favourite contradictory ideas about these. One was that poetry is something spontaneous. The poet, he says, speaking of himself conceals "his rhythm and uniformity......in the roots of his verse, not to be seen of themselves, but to break forth loosely as lilacs on a bush and takes shapes compact, as the shapes of melons or chestnuts, or pears." As against this delightful vision of poetry

budding spontaneously we have the other picture that Whitman had of a poet—the poet with his note book crammed, the poet with his life spent in revising and rearranging his poems.

As regards the form of poetry Whitman says the artist is to develop a form as closely analogous as possible to organic growth : "to imitate not simply nature's works but her ways of working—to enter into the spirit of the universe by aiming at fulness and variety without end." This view of Whitman's accounts for one of the characteristic features of his poetry—the numerous long catalogues. These are the poet's attempts to give expression to the 'fulness and variety of nature."

In conformation with his above-mentioned theory, Whitman developed a poetic style devoid of conventional rhyme and meter. Employing the line instead of the foot as the stylistic unit, his poetry depends upon parallelism and other reiterative devices for its structure and cadence. Among the formative influence on Whitman the King James version of the Bible must be reckoned as one of the greatest. It would be an exaggeration to call the Bible the actual source of Whitman's poetic form, but it offers a convenient analogy for understanding it. Another influence on him is the blank verse of Shakespeare's plays.

The musical cadence of Whitman's language was brought about not merely by his fondness for the Bible, but also by his devotion to Italian opera. To Whitman poetry meant a kind of musical utterance. He describes it as 'vocalism' and 'recitatif.' He speaks of uttering his verse, of 'carpoling' 'warbling' 'trilling' his 'songs' and he speaks of himself as a "chansonnier" Like singers at the opera he seems to be relying on his 'voice' for making the right impact on his readers.

The exotic flavour of Whitman's poetry is the result of his sprinkling pages with Italian, French and Spanish terms, as well as Sanskrit terms from the "Bhagavat Geeta.' Expressions such as Americano, formulas, delicatesse, troftoir, embouchure, and so on abound in his poetry. Emerson described Whitman's vocabulary as a "remarkable mixture of the "Bhagavat Geeta" and "The New York Herald." Marcus Cunliffe writes about Whitman's style : "He overworked some words like 'copious', 'orbic'; he made strange terminations : 'promulge,' 'philosophs,' 'literates.' He took words from phrenology: 'amative,' 'adhesive.' The results are often ludicrous :

"The freshness and candour of their physiognomy, the copiousness and decision of their phrenology......"

"He revised constantly, but not always for the better. In fact. Whitman at his worst is unbelievably bad. He flaunts his queer style as a savage might flaunt a top-hat retrieved from somebody's dustbin." He also used laughable epithets.

His strong national feeling had also a hand in shaping Whit-

man's peculiar poetic techniques. In his poem 'Thou Mother with Thy Equal Brood' Whitman expresses his firm resolve to offer to his mother country a kind of poetry different from that of Europe both in form and content.

> *The conceits of the poets of other lands I'd bring thee not*
> *Nor the compliments that have served their turn so long*
> *Nor rhyme, nor the classics, nor perfume of foreign court of indoor library.*

All his miscellaneous tastes and experiences went into the development of his poetic technique and style : "the Quakerism of his mother's family; Shakespeare, and the opera – the excitement of the sung or spoken word, communicated in a public place; phrenology, which reassured him as to his own disposition, the more permanently respectable sciences, in which he—somewhat like Emerson—discovered cosmic patterns, the trundling verse of Martin Farquhar Tupper; George Sand's 'Consuelo' and its sequel, 'The Countess of Rudolstadt' which may have helped him to visualize his role of spokesman for mankind; Poe who pointed out for him the impossibility of the long poem: the crowds on the Broadway, or on the Brooklyn Ferry; the tides washing in from the Atlantic; the sweet modulation of the seasons in the country-side: the fell of the great continent rolling interminably westward; from the sea-board where he lived : all these and many other ingredients went into the first edition of 'Leaves of Grass' which appeared when he was thirty six " (CUNLIFFE).

The effectiveness of Whitman's vocabulary lies in its extraordinary power and this power in turn is derived from the passionare intensity and ringing sincerity of his words His words are absolutely true and full of unquestionable authority. He packs his verse with vivid pictures of innumerable objects. He stated that 'a perfect user of words uses things' and proved this theory by his practice. His language oscillates with marvellous sensibility to the magnetic object that stirs it, accumulated blunt monosyllables, undulating phrases with one adjective sticking up sharp in the middle, the knock of consonants, the flow of open vowels.* The structure of "Song of "Myself' is not logical. It may best be compared to the wheel, with the imagery and the episodes of the poem radiating like spokes from the hub of the individual and representative consciousness of the poet. In this respect, Whitman may be said to have anticipated the modern stream of consciousness technique.

Though the rejection of metrical forms and rhyme and conventional stanzaic structure was Whitman's avowed aim and his

* Geoffery Dutton—Whitman.

regular practice at times he used conventional meter and stanza form. "Pioneers O, Pioneers" makes use of the four-lined stanza and regular metrical pattern.

Come my tan faced children
Follow well in order, get your weapons ready,
Have you your pistols ? have you your sharp-edged axes ?
Pioneers ! O, Pioneers !

"O Captain ! My Captain !" is also a remarkable poem not merely because of its intrinsic merits but because of its metrical regularity as well. These poems show that Whitman was quite capable of wielding the regular conventional meter of English poetry. That he did not stick to it always is the result of his desire not to. The subject of Whitman's poetry is unusual and daringly original. All the domains of the body and soul lent themselves to poetical treatment at his hands. So he needed a diction and a technique equally daring, equally free from the shackles of conventionality. It was in his role as a technical innovator that Whitman influenced American poetry most. His influence is particularly noticeable in the works of poets like Lindsay and Sandburg. The 'new Poetry' of the second decade of the twentieth century in America owed a great deal to him and the poetic revolution of which he had been the prophetic voice, proclaimed him the great poet of American democracy, hailing him as the liberator of poetry and the father of free-verse movement.

Q. 43. Write an appreciation of Whitman's elegies.

Ans. The literary form, the elegy is something that can be traced to ancient Greece, where it originally meant a poem written in elegiac couplets sung to the accompaniment of the flute. Its themes could very well be martial or convival subjects, though often they were laments and epitaphs, spoken by the dead in the first person. Later the meaning of the word became more restricted. It now has this connotation : a mournful lyric which has as its theme either death in general or the death of a specific person. The poem "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" by Thomas Gray is the best example of the elegy inspired by general reflections on death. The elegy soon got associcated with the pastoral form and the result of this happy combination has been such works as Milton's "Lycidas", Shelley's "Adonais" and Arnold's "Thyrsis." In America the elegy became a thing of remarkable power and beauty in the hands of Walt Whitman, who wrote the two greatest elegies in American literature—'O Captain My Captain !' and 'When Lilacs last in the Dooryard Bloom'd.' These two were inspired by the death of Abraham Lincoln while a third elegy written by Whitman "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" is an exquisite lyrical expression of grief caused by the thought of death in general.

The two elegies on the death of Lincoln are deeply stirring because the grief depicted therein is profound and genuine. Lincoln was one for whom Whitman had great admiration. In his way, Whitman had prophesied the advent of Lincoln, saying that it would please him to see some bearded pioneer, shrewd, healthy, well-informed, appear in the west, stride over the Alleghenies and walk into the White House. The assassination of Lincoln was naturally a cause for intense grief leading to poetic composition. The loss of such a man, plunged the poet into acute sorrow out of which have crystallised two lovely elegies. Though in none of these does Whitman mention the name of Lincoln it is evident from symbols and imagery that the poems are about him.

"O Captain ! My Captain !" describes Lincoln as a great and beloved captain, who after steering the vessel, the American nation, through storm and stress to triumphant victory and glory lies dead and cold on the deck. The greatness of Lincoln's achievement, the colossal nature of the danger that beset him, the lasting loyalty that he inspired in the hearts of the people are all beautifully conveyed in the very first stanza.

O Captain ! My Captain ! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weather'd every rack,the prize we saught is won......

In the second stanza we find that the grief of the poet gains momentum. In an ecstasy of lament the poet urges the Captain to get up to 'rise up and hear the bells.' The personal note becomes more intense in the third stanza where the poet says :

"My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and stiff
My father does not fell my arm"

Here again the central idea is sustained and emphasised—the idea that Lincoln led the nation through the blackest hour winnnig the laurels, holding the nation together, though he himself became an offering at the altar of the nation. One note in the poem therefore is that of wild rejoicing and exultation :

Exult O shores and ring O bells

but on the other side is the picture of oppressive leaden sorrow :

But I walk with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

"O Captain ! My Captain !" is remarkable also from the point of view of technique. Whitman shows here a metrical regularity which is rare in his poetry. This elegy therefore has had the approval of all readers, though Whitman himself did not care for it as much as the world has done.

"When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" is Whitman's finest poem and one of the great lyrics in the English language. The poem is remarkable for its wonderful use of symbolism. "As in most elegies, the person mourned is hardly more than the occasion of the work ; but this poem, unlike 'Lycidas' or 'Adonais' does not transmute the central figure merely by generalizing him out of all recognition. Lincoln is seldom mentioned either as a person or a mere type. Instead the focus of the poem is a presentation of the poet's mind at work in the context of Lincoln's death. If the true subject of 'Lycidas' and 'Adonais' is not Edward King or John Keats, but the poet, the true subject of Whitman's 'Lilacs' is not the poet but the poetic process. And even this subject is not treated simply by generalizing a particular situation. The act of poetizing and the context in which it takes place have continuity in time and space but no particular existence. Both are "ever-returning" : the tenas shift, the poet is in different places at once: and at the end this whole phase of creation is moving inexorably forward."

"When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" is a poem that follows the structure of the classical pastoral elegy. the first part of the poem, that is, upto stanza 13 is the lament. We have the picture of the coffin, the funeral procession and the traditional offering of the gifts by the mourners. The lament is followed by the consolation from the thirteenth stanza to the end of the poem. It is only in this structure that Whitman follows the classical pattern. In the symbols which enrich the poem, he shows a taste that is entirely American. The classical symbols are rejected and native ones substituted. The laurel of classical elegies gives way to the lilac and instead of mythological birds we have the homely brown thrush. Even in writing an exquisite and well-shaped elegy Whitman could not forget his American sense or his common people.

The meaning of the poem is conveyed entirely through the symbols that are interwoven. The three chief symbols are the lilacs, the beautiful western star and the hermit thrush These symbols often blend and merge with one another. The lilacs that bloom profusely in spring to the poet's mind "thoughts of him I love." The leaves of the lilacs, with heart-shape stand for human love The beautiful western star that figures prominently in the poem is Lincoln himself. As for the bird, the hermit thrush to which the poet finally listens and which at last reveals to him the true meaning of death through its song, it is meant to represent the poetic insight and inspiration that ultimately brings him consolation.*

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* Charles Feidelson in "Symbolism and American Literature."

Then quite suddenly Whitman makes the scope of his poem wide. What began as an elegy for one man, whose name is withheld for reasons of classic propriety, has become an elegy for all the dead. The poet announces his intention to bring his blossoms and branches to all the dead, and goes even further, to "chant a song for O sane and sacred death." The poet then gives us an apostrophe to death that begins thus :

Come lovely and soothing death,
Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,
Sooner or later delicate death.

This hymn of death is followed by a vision of the "battle corpses, myriads of them", "the white skeletons of young men", "the debris and debris of all the slain soldiers of the war." But the poet is fortified by the reflection that they (the dead) "were fully at rest, they suffered not."

The poem thus rises from solemnity to exaltation. Grief gives place to a soothing peace that the soul of the poet, a peace that comes from tranquil contemplation of death.

Then with the knowledge of death as walking one side of me,
And the thought of death close-walking the other of me,
And in the middle as with companions, and as holding the hands of companions,
I fled forth to the hiding receiving night that talks not
Down to the shores of the water, the path by the swamp in the dimness.
To the solemn shadowy cedars and ghostly pines so still
And the singer so shy to the rest received me,
The gray brown bird I know received us comrades three,
And he sang the carol of death and verse for him I love
From deep secluded recesses,
From the fragrant cedars and the ghostly pines so still,
Came the carol of the bird,
And the charm of the carol rapt me,
As I held as if by their hands my comrades in the night
And the voice of my spirit tallied the song of the bird.

There is in this poem a note of transcending peace, rather than of poignant tragedy. Though Whitman does not develop the theme of immortality he gives sufficient hints about the life that follows death something to be welcomed and be glad about.

And the soul turning to thee O vast and well-veiled death
And the body gratefully nestling to thee.

"Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" like Whitman's poem "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" is a great hymn to

death Originally called 'A word out of the sea' it is Whitman's most complex and successfully-integrated poem. As in "Lilacs" the poet here also uses three images in fusion, the boy, the bird and the sea. The boy is the poet himself 'in the making'. The poem is actually a grown-up's reverie over a boy's experience. Though it is one of the greatest elegies in the English language it is an altogether novel form of the elegy discarding all preceding patterns The bird, though a traditional symbol in poetry is seen and interpreted in a new light. Whitman has no use for the pleasing assumption that birds sing out of unalloyed happiness. In his poem we find that the song of the bird is a lament, one of the most poignant poems of loss ever written, with passages that touch the heart with infinite pathos :

> *Low—hanging moon* !
> *What is that dusky spot in your brown yellow* !
> *O it is the shape, the shape of my mate* !
> *O moon do not keep her from me any longer.*

Interwoven with the theme of the bird's lament is the surge of the sea, the mother-earth endlessly rocking. We are told of "the white arms out in the breakers tirelessly tossing", the winds blowing and "with angry moans the fierce old mother incessantly moaning". On the sands of Paumanok's shore gray and rustling." With these is the third picture, of the child standing, the boy with the questioning soul. He starts by observing the birds in curiosity. The bird-song, the song of the poet and the whispering of the sea blend to create that note of tranquillity transcending all grief; and it is on this note that the poem closes.

Surely Whitman is at his best in these three great elegies that he wrote. His preoccupation with death is seen in many of his poems and this lends to them an elegiac tone. It is said that Whitman evinces a kinship with the graveyard school of English poets in his recurring contemplation of death But he is utterly original in his handling of the theme just as he is original in the metrical pattern and technique of his elegies. His poems on Lincoln's death express a grief shared by all America, whereas the poems "Where Lilacs Last......" and "Out of the Cradle..." are exquisite expressions of the poet's reflections on the mystery of death. As such they speak directly to all mankind and they are sure to stay alive as two of the greatest poems ever written on the theme of death. These are surely Whitman's "sweetest songs."

Q. 44. Comment on Walt Whitman's modernity

Ans. Recent critical opinion regarding Whitman's poetry is that he has not been granted his due. Though adained as America's greatest poet, Whitman's contribution to the evolution of

modern poetry has not been fully appreciated. Two other American poets Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot have been recognized as the mighty forces behind modern poetry ; but it would be unfair to deny Whitman's part of the credit for making modern poetry possible. A prominent critic has pointed out that there have been two traditions in American poetry, and the writers of these two traditions may be described as 'the red skin' and 'the pale face'. It has been pointed out that Whitman was 'the chief red skin. vital, native, free-swinging, rhetorical, incantatory and optimistic' and that the chief pale face was T. S. Eliot, 'civilized, ironic, pessimistic and inward-turned'. Ezra Pound and T. S Eliot combined to get the 'pale face' tradition popular and Whitman's tradition was drowned in the struggle. But later Ezra Pound himself paid a tribute to Whitman in which he acknowledges the fact that Whitman made the modern poetic revolution possible.

I make a pact with you, Walt Whitman—
I have detested you long enough.
I come to you as a grown child,
Who has had a pig headed father ;
I am old enough now to make friends.
It was you that broke the new wood.
Now is a time for carving.
We have one sap and one root—
Let there be commerce between us.

Pound's detestations of Whitman could certainly have affected the poet's status for Pound has been a poet-maker and the greatest 'Voice' behind modern poetry. This is why Karl Shapiro, one of America's poets and critics put a lot of blame on Eliot and Pound. 'The most salient act of literary sabotage committed by Pound and Eliot has been their immolation of Walt Whitman', he writes.

To a careful student of Whitman's poetry it is clear that the greatest thing he has done for modern poetry is his radical innovation of poetic form, and his use of free verse. Whitman freed the spirit of American poetry from its enslavement to the past and a worn-out tradition. The independence of American letters is expressed in lines like these :

Come Muse migrate from Greece and Ionia,
Cross out please those immensely overpaid accounts,
That matter of Troy and Achilles' wrath and Aeneas' Odysseus' wanderings,
Placard 'Removed' and 'To Let' on the rocks of your snowy Parnassus,
For know a better, fresher, busier sphere, a wide, untired domain awaits, demands you.

It is interesting to note what a modern poet and critic like Louis Untarmeyer has to say regarding the magnitude of the service

that Whitman did for modern poetry. "Whitman fathered free verse, but he did much more : he also widened the gamut, extended the subject matter, and liberated the spirit of modern poetry " It was Walt Whitman who taught the poets to make use of the voice of the people, the richness of colloquialisms and the colourfulness of slang. He urged the banishment of "delicate lady words" and "gloved gentlemen words" and the use, instead of words vibrant with the living break of the common people, the ten thousand native idiomatic words.

Whitman's best poems have shown the world how cosciousness can be dramatized effectively. His poems are the utterances of the free mind, turned inward, truly conscious and indwelling. Constant Rourke in her book '*American Humor*' has drawn our attention to this aspect of Whitman : "That movement toward the soliloquy which had appeared in popular modes and again in the writings of Emerson and Thoreau reached a culmination in Whitman. His finest poems are cast in the deep and delicate form : 'When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed', the rhapsodic 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry', the long and sometimes cryptic'Starting from Panmanok', the reflective songs in 'Children of Adam'. The monologue or rhapsody was turned inward, without analysis or introspection : moods, shades of feeling, fragments of thought, pour out in an untrammelled stream which is often not far from the so-called stream of consciousness. Whitman anticipated by many years the modern mode of inner revelation with its broken sequences its irrelevant changes, its final move into the realm of soliloquy." So it was Whitman who anticipated the method of the stream-of-consciousness.

The magnificent rhythms of Whitman's free verse have been echoed by many modern poets. The avowed Whitmanians among modern American poets are Hart Crane, Allan Ginsberg, and Joseph Riddel. Carl Sandburg illustrates the indirect way in which Whitman has influenced the poets after him,—by teaching them to eschew. Sandburg's poem *Grass*, even when dealing with Whitman's favourite subject "the democratic herbage" makes use of a method utterly different. In the poetic method of such a poem one finds the rules propounded by Ezra Pound—direct treatment of the thing 'and the shedding of every word not strictly necessary to the presentation.'

Whitman is very much like Gerard Manley Hopkins who too has had considerable influence on modern poetry It is an intensity of feeling and concentration of vision that Whitman shared with Hopkins. Yet temperamentally the Jesuit priest—poet of England was utterly different from the sensuous and pantheistic Whitman Yet their basic kinship was reluctantly acknowledged by Hopkins thus : "I may as well say what I should not otherwise have said, that I always knew in my heart Walt Whitman's mind to be more like my own than any other man's

living As he is a very great scoundrel, this is not a very pleasant confession." Whitman's affinity with the Imagist poets is also unmistakable though, when he wrote, Imagism was unheard of. The following lines exhibit a quality that later came to be called imagist

The little one sleeps in his cradle,
I lift the gauze and look a long time, and silently brush away flies with my hand
The youngster and the red-faced girl turn aside up the bushy hill
I peeringly view them from the top.
The suicide sprawls on the bloody floor of the bedroom,
I witness the corpse with its dabbled hair, I note
Where the pistol has fallen.

It is Whitman's democratic vistas and his embracing of modern science that link Whitman to the moderns. He was essentially optimistic and a sincere believer in progress. But while the democratic spirit he shares with modern poets, the later do not have much sympathy with Whitman's Cosmic consciousness. Rather, they evince what has been termed existential consciousness. In *Harvests of Change American Literature*, 1865—1914 Jay Martin points out how influential Whitman has been on modern realists like Dreiser. Whitman's fascination with the facts of material life, his celebration of the body electric, his listing of the actualities of the metropolis and of life en masse have swayed modern poetic thought.

Q. 45. Comment on the oriental element in Walt Whitman's poetry.

Ans. Whitman is indisputably the greatest poet of America. The world recognizes him as the mighty trumpeter of America—its people and its democracy. Rabindranath Tagore observed "Whitman is America's greatest poet. Through his work I know more of America and I catch its heart-beat. He is the great voice of the American nation—the greatest it ever had." But great poets are of the world and great poetry is a 'many-splendoured thing', emitting various illuminating rays. In Whitman's poetry too one discerns various influences—influences that merged with his tremendous individuality and originality to give the world one of its richest and most striking collections of poems. In forming Whitman and his poetic style, Quakerism, Transcendentalism, Emersonian philosophy and the Orient had each a role to play.

Whitman, a great poet was willing to learn from the great poets of the world. He imbibed their ideas and echoed their tones Homer and Ossian the great Persian poet and the Bible clearly had

their influence on Whitman. From Homer he got the sense of epic background, the ability to see the individual in a large public context and to see him more, not less clearly this way. From the second, Whitman took suggestions for a free rhythmic prose as well as for the coun er pointing of lyrical emotion with heroic design. The influence of the Bible was even greater. Whitman's verse exhibirs a grandeur which is the result of his imitation of the rhapsodical style of the Hebrew verse. Whitman loved to read the Bible and it is not surprising th his verse assumed the quality that he admired in the Bible. It was again, from the Old Testament that Whitman got the account of prophecy. In his moods of exaltation and denunciation Whitman resembles the Old Testament prophets. He looks through the thick veils covering the future and predicts for America a bright future in sonorous terms.

The influence that Hinduism exerted on Whitman is quite deep During Whitman's early days there was in America, especially in New England, great vogue for Hindu religious ideals. The Transcendentalists were themselves greatly influenced by the East and the interest in the orient was a feature of American as well as European romanticism. Emerson's views were coloured by the teachings of Hinduism. It is not clear whether Hindu thought entered Whitman's mind through the American transcendentalists or through a direct study of Hindu scriptures in translations. Whitman makes use of the term 'Maya' to describe something illusory. He asks in "New Person Drawn Towords Me" :

Do you think I am trusty and faithful ?
Do you see no further than this facade, this smooth and
tolerant manner of me ?
Do you suppose yourself advancing on real ground
toward a real heroic man ?
Have you no thought O dreamer that it may be all Maya
illusion ?

Whitman on one occasion even identifies himself with Brahma, equating it with the Old Testament Jehovah.

From this side Jehovah am I,
Old Brahma I, and I Saturnius am ;
No time affects me—I am Time, Old Modern as any,
Consolator most milk, the promised one advancing,
With gentle hand extended – the mightier God am I
Foretold by prophets and poets, in their most rapt
prophecies and poems,
No time nor change shall ever change me or my words.
Life of the great round world, the sun and stars, and of
man—I, the general soul,
Here the square finishing, the solid,

I the most solid,
Breathe my breath also through these songs.

Whitman's inspiration in writing this is certainly nothing derived from American tradition or Quakerism, but something derived from Hindu doctrine of the relation between the 'Atma' and the 'Parmatma.' The mysticism and occultism that we find in "The Leaves of Grass" were the result of the oriental influence on Whitman. The following illustrations from his poems clearly evince the Oriental influences working upon Whitman :—

1. *There was a child went forth every day,*
And the first object he looked upon, that object he became,
And that object became part of him for the day or a certain part of the day,
Or for many years or stretching cycles of years.

2. *I will make the poems of materials, for I think they are to be the most spiritual poems,*
And I will make the poems of my body and of mortality,
For I think I shall then supply myself with the poems of my soul and immortality.
("Starting from Paumanok")

3. *I believe in you my soul, the other I am must not abase itself of you,*
And you must not be abased to the other.
("Song of Myself")

4. *If the body were not the soul, what is the soul ?*
("I Sing the Body Electric")

5. *I am large, I contain multitudes.*

6. *Magnifying and applying come I,*
....
Buying drafts of Obiris, Isis, Belus, Brahman, Budha...
("Song of Myself")

In his mysticism, therefore, Whitman is highly influenced by the Oriental thought. Tagore once said that no other American has so accurately got the spirit of Oriental mysticism as Whitman. According to BLISS PERRY (in his book *Whitman*), "In his capacity for brooding imaginative ecstasy, he was Oriental rather than Western." In 1856 Thoreau complimented Whitman on the publication of *Leaves of Grass*. His remark was : "Wonderfully like the Orientals." Other critics such as Gay Wilson Allen, William N. Guthrie, Dorothy F. Mercer and others also admit and trace Oriental influences on Whitman's poetry.

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Q. 46 Justify Walt Whitman's claim to the title "poet of Democracy.

Ans Walt Whitman appeared at a time when British liberal thought had such excellent spokesmen as Carlyle, Arnold Ruskin and Morris. Whitman seemed to combine all their influences, and bring forth something radically new. He was soon accepted as a great supporter of radicalism To the liberals of the late Nineteenth century and the early Twentieth century Walt Whitman has been indisputably a prophet, and a political seer. This is quite natural as more than any other American or English poet Whitman has sung rhapsodic praises of Democracy hailing it in ecstatic terms.

Whitman's book *Democratic Vistas* (1871) is a permanent statement not only of the ideal of liberal democracy but of its fundamental principles. Though there has been much talk recently on the term democracy and its ambiguous nature, to Whitman the term envisaged a clear idea. Democracy meant to him a self-governing society of free and responsible individuals. Whitman once defined democracy in the following way : "Democracy is not so much a political system as a grand experiment for the development of the individuals. Political democracy, as it exists and practically works in America, with all its threatening evils, supplies a training school for making first-class men."

In *Democratic Vistas* Whitman has pointed out the shortcomings of democratic practices and the political corruption prevalent in his day. However, he has expressed his faith in democracy stressing also the fact that the hope for the reform and improvement of democracy lay in the self-reform of the individual, in personal integrity and conscience. A significant factor in Whitman's political philosophy is his glorification of the individual. Though the phrase "en masse" appears repeatedly in the poems of Whitman it is not to be deduced that he was an apostle of the socialistic set up of society. He was emphatically of the view that society should recognize the infinite worth of the individual. Whitman's ideal society is one where the individual is valid. because in such a society law is loved. 'He envisaged and exemplified a process of spiritualisation which alone could save democracy from moral disaster.'

American democracy interested Whitman most. This was the ever-burning theme for his poetry. He embraced it and expressed it in its all manifestation fields, trees, animals, birds, farms, light, air, sea, men, women, and their politics and social transactions, factories workshops, offices, stores, streets, cities, plains and the countryside. Whitman accepted these and many more items as the integral part of democracy.

The title of Whitman's book of verse, *Leaves of Grass*, is in itself an excellent evidence of the democratic spirit of the poet. In his poem "Song of Myself" Whitman writes :—

A child said what is the grass fetching it to me with full hands,
How could I answer the child ? I do not know what it is any more than he.

But it is clear that in naming his book *Leaves of Grass* Whitman was accepting this humblest of created things as a symbol of his fierce and passionate belief in democracy. His choice of a title is an emphatic assertion that the common humble things of the earth are fit subjects for poetry. This is quite consistent behaviour from a poet whom the word 'equable' was of infinite value. Whitman's ideal society is one where every one is equal, where inequalities and social justice do not exist In one portion of 'Song of Myself' Whitman expresses his admiration for animals. He claims he could turn and live with animals for a number of reasons, one of which is this :

Not one is dissatisfied– not one is demented with the mania of owing things ;
Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived thousands of years ago;
Not one is respectable or industrious over the whole. earth.

In the words of John Burroughs, "The reader who would get at the spirit and meaning of *Leaves of Grass* must remember that its animating principle from first to last, is Democracy.........Yet it is never Whitman that speaks so much as it is Democracy that speaks through him." It is to drive home to the reader that he regarded all Americans alike, that Whitman has given long catalogues of all kinds of people, high and low,diverse and numerous, of his country. In his lyric "I Hear America Singing" Whitman celebrates the mechanics, the carpenter, the mason, the boatman, the deckhand, the shoe-maker, the wood cutter, and the plough boy.

Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,
The day what belongs to the day—at night the party of young fellows, robust, friendly
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.

In tones of exquisite lyric Whitman sings of the worth of Democracy, envisaging for American democracy a brilliant future. In "Thou Mother With Thy Equal Brood" he extols democracy thus :

Sail, sail, thy best, ship of Democracy,
Of value is thy freight, 'tis not the present only.
The past is also stored in thee,
Thou holdest not the venture of thy self alone, not of the Western continent alone,

Earth's resume entire floats on thy keel ! O ship, is
steadied by the spars,
With thee Time voyages in trust, the antecedent nations
Sink or swim with thee,
With all their ancient struggles martyrs heroes, epics
Wars, thou bear'st the other continents,
Theirs, theirs as much as thine, the destination-port
triumphant ;

Steer then with good strong hand and eye
O helmsman, thou carriest great companions,
Venerable priestly Asia sails this day with thee,
And royal feudal Europe sails with thee.

One of his short poems is dedicated to Democracy. "For You O Democracy" runs thus :

Come I will make the continent indissoluble,
I will make the most splendid race the sun ever shone
upon,
I will make divine magnetic lands.
With the love of comrades,
With the life-long love of comrades.
I will plant companionship thick as trees along all the
rivers
Of America, and along the shores of the great lakes, and
all over the prairies,
I will make inseparable cities with their arms about each
other's necks
By the love of comrades,
By the many love of comrades.
For you these from me, O Democracy, to serve you
mafemme
For you, for you I am trilling these songs.

The phrase "love of comrades" occurring again and again in the poetry of Whitman underlines an important tenet in Whitman's political philosophy—that of mutual support and dependence among the members of a democratic society. In spite of Whitman's zealous upholding of the individual he ardently believed that isolation is something unnatural for a human being and that there is security only in cooperation among friends. In "A Noisel ss Patient Spider" Whitman draws a fine analogy expressing this idea :

A noiseless patient spider,
I mark'd where on a little promontory it stood isolated,
Mark'd how to explore the vacant vast surrounding,
It launched forth filament, filament, filament, out of
itself,
Ever unreeling them, ever tirelessly speeding them.
And you O my soul where you stand.

Surrounded, detached, in measureless oceans of space,
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking the spheres to connect them.
Till the bridge you will need be form'd, till the doctile anchor
Hold,
Till the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere O my Soul.

The entire group of poems called the Calamus poem illustrate the idea that success of democracy depends on the co-operation of its members.

Whitman always identified himself with the common man and considered himself the singer of the greatness and glory of the common man. No doubt he intended his poetry and his philosophy for the soul of the common man Whitman's kinship with the common man has left its mark on his style too. He was, as W. H. Auden has pointed out, "the first great man to write in the language of his people." Like Dante he wrote in what was termed the "vulgar tongue." Some critics point out that Whitman's politics and his journalism have left indelible marks on his poetry and that "the cheap rhetoric of political meeting and the self-important trivialities of provincial newspapers overlaid and tainted whatever natural simplicity of expression there was in him." Whitman as a poet of Democracy invites comparison with Milton who was also a political poet Though their outlook was quite different, they are alike in this "that in their poetry more than in any other in English, politics are a consciously felt presence."

In Whitman's ardent creed that poetry should be written for and about the common man, he was by no means unique Wordsworth and Burns and the romantics had proved that the subject matter of poetry can very well be the humble shepherd or the country lass and that poetry is not limited in its subjects to the heroes, extraordinary personages or 'moving accidents' Whitman however went a step further and seemed to think that he could write about average persons and ordinary events, when he himself remained in an average and ordinary state of mind This belief of Whitman has not been borne out by his verse. His verse is true poetry only when he is in an exalted and spiritual mood, which is anything but an average and ordinary state of mind. In his best poems we find that Whitman's passionate love of common humanity has raised him to that purity of utterance which is the mark of genius.

Whitman was a singer and prophet of the new-born democracy. He did not like, as the old bards used to do, to sing of kings, princes, nobles, or peers, but of the "divine average" of America, busy with the homely yet honourable task of day-to-day life :

In the labor of engines and trades, and the labor of fields,
I find the developments,
And find the eternal meanings......

So Whitman favoured the cardinal principles of democracy— equality, fraternity and liberty. He sang, without distinction, of the blacksmith, the Negro teamaster, the butcher, the farmer returning from the fields, the mother sewing, the soldier keeping watch on the battlefield, the prostitute, the pioneer, and hundred of others—all move in a motely, yet somehow intensely living, throng across his pages. Ws hear the hum and clatter of house-building, shingle-dressing, ship-joining, ferrying, mining, iron-smelting, stone-cutting, and cotton-leading.

It is ironical that despite Whitman's burning love of the common man and his intense yearning to be appreciated by the common man Whitman has been the poet of the elite, of the intellectuals. However it is clear that Whitman did not expect immediate recognition or appreciation. Rather he looks to the future with all expectancy, relying on the poets to come to grant him what he deserves. He invokes them thus :

Poets to come
Not today is to justify me, and
Democracy and what we are for,
But you, a new brood, native, athletic continental greater than before known
You must justify me.

It would have given Whitman immense gratification to know, that he is recongnised today as the great trumpeter of Democracy.

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Q. 47. Write a note on the element of mysticism in the poetry of Walt Whitman.

Ans. Whitman is not a mystic philosopher in the traditional, philosophic sense. He is a mystic in art. His mysticism arises out of his observations about life and death, about man's spiritual and material predicament on the earth and life beyond this physical reality. Mysticism is opposed to naturalism which categorically denies the existence of God ; it is also different from dogmatism which talks as if it knew all about God. Mysticism lays stress on the personal experience of God, direct contact with the creative spirit ; it is a communion of the soul with God.

Whitman is a poet of mysticism. It is evident from his *Leaves of Grass* whom **Edward Carpenter** relates to the tradition of mystical writing right from the *Vedas* to Sufi poetry. In the words of **E. Underhill** Whitman was "acquainted, beyond most poets and seers, with the pheonomena of the illuminated life." According to

Richard M. Bucke, Whitman was conscious of the imminence of the Divine in the universe. **James** thinks Whitman a sporadic mystic. **Malcolm Cowley** calls his mysticism more Indian than Christian, as it incorporates concepts such as metempsychosis and karma. **P. N. Srinivasachari** regards him as a nature mystic.

Broadly speaking, Whitman's mysticism is essentially Vedantic and can be explained in terms of Advaita or non-dualism. Vedantic mysticism, in a word, is the realisation of the individual soul's identity with the Brahma (the Supreme Soul) which is at once transcendent and immanent. Such echoes are heard in the *Leaves of Grass*

O my brave soul !
O farther fatther sail !
O daring joy, but safe ! are they not the seas of God ?
O farther, farther, farther, sail !

'Whitman's mystical vision is cosmic. He is a theistic Vedantist who sings of the immanent and not of the transcendent aspect of the greater self.

From his boyhood he was influenced by the transcendental philosophy of Emerson. His mysticism can be found in the following poems : *Song of Myself*, *Cut of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking*, *The Sleepers*, *As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life*, and *Scented Herbage of My Breast*. The climax of his mystic vision can be seen in the following lines of "Song of Myself" :

(1) *I celebrate myself,*
And what I assume you shall assume.
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

(2) *Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and*
knowledge that pass all the argument of the earth,
And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my
own,
And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of my
own......

"The mystical vision opens the inner eye of the poet. In his superconscious state, Blake saw the universe in a grain of sand and Dame Julian of Norwich discovered the secret of existence in a little hezel nut. Whitman found a profound spiritual symbol in the common grass, "the handkerchief of the Lord." The leaves of grass as we generally know in the human world became the all pervasive, immortal spirit of the universe.

"A second mystical experience is discoverable in Section 28, a tremendous response to the sense of touch "quiversing me to a new identity," and the 'I' now merge in its environment. The self becomes the actor : "I am the man, I suffer'd, I......was there." The mystical identification now assumes a really cosmic form:

"I skirt sierras, my palms cover continents." After playing a series of roles including those of the teacher and the prophet, the self withdraws and departs " (A. N. Dwiv di).

In "The Sleepers', the poet describes his nocturnal wanderings in a dream and in it "night" and "sleep" symbolise the gradual passing away of the mystical vision "As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life" is a moving account of the poet's miserable spiritual wreck. "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" is about the solitary singer, the lonely self crying in anguish over the loss of its Beloved and its emergence from that dark experience. "Passage to India" is a movement backward to primal thought, as India is treated as the cradle of human civilization. There are several passages in his poems which manifest his heavenward flights. But he is a mystic who does not reject the world. He involves in sex in Nature and other worldly things as well. To him, death is like night, which is magnetic, nourihsing, restorative. "The true son of God shall come singing his songs," the writer of these words, Whitman, like a true mystic writes :

O we can wait no longer,
We too take ship, O soul,
Joyous we too launch out on trackless seas,
Fearless for unknown shores on waves of ecstasy to soil,
Amid the wafting winds, (thou pressing me to thee, I thee to me, O soul,)
Caroling fee, singing our song of god,
Chanting our chant of pleasant exploration.

Q. 48. Discuss Whitman as a poet of love and sex.

Ans. In "Songs of Myself", Whitman speaks of himself as one who is semi-barbarous. semi-angelic singer of sensual pleasures. He is a great poet of love and sex As a mystic he has never rejected the life of senses. He does not seek an escape from the hard realities of life such as love and sex. Once he remarked that the Leaves of Grass is "avowedly the song of Sex." His other poems too manifest his deep sympathy for carnal man. He himself stated : "Sex will not be put aside, it is the great ordination of the universe "

Whereas most other American writers used sex for sentiment, Whitman used it for artistic force. Just see a few of his descriptions :—

(1) *A woman waits for me, she contains all, nothing is lacking,*
Yet all were lacking if sex were lacking, or if the moisture of the right man were lacking.
Sex contains all, bodies, souls,

Meanings, proofs, purities, delicacies, results, promulgations,
Without shame the man I like knows and avows the deliciousness of his sex.
Without shame the woman I like knows and avows hers...

The above lines are from "A Woman Waits for Me." The last lines of this poem are highly sensual and sex-stimulating :

I do not hurt you any more than is necessary for you,
I pour the stuff to start sons and daughters fit for these States, I press with slow rude muscle,
I brace myself effectively, I listen to no entreatives,
I dare not withdraw till I deposit what has so long accumulated within me.

In other poems too we have the echoes of sex, and bare and nude descriptions of feelings for sex, without vulgarity and obscenity, indeed. For example, in "Native Moments" he writes :

Give me now libidinous joys only,
Give me the drench of my passions, give me life coarse and rank,
To-day, I go consort with Nature's darling, to-night too,
I am for those who believe in loose delights, I share the midnight orgies of young men,
I dance with the dancers and drink with the drinkers...

In another poem, "Once I pass'd Through a Populous City," he says :

Yet now of all that city I remember only a woman
I casually met there who detain't me for love of me,
Day by day and night by night we were together...
I remember I say only that woman was passionately clung to me —

In "Song of Myslef," especially in sections 5, 11, 15, 19, 21 and 24 we have allusions to love and sex. In section 19, for example, he writes :

This is the press of bashful hand -- this is the float and order of hair,
This the touch of my lips to yours, this the murmur of yearning
This the far-off depth and height reflecting my own face,
This the thoughtful merge of myself, and the out let again

"Spontaneous Me" is yet another interesting poem from the sexual point of view:

Love-thoughts, love-juice, love-odor, love-yieiding, love climbers, and the climbing sap.
Arms and hands of love, lips of love, phallic thumb of love, breasts of love...

and also:

The limpid liquid within the young man,
The vex'd corrosion so pensive and so painnful,
The torment, the irritable tide that will not beat rest,
The young man that flushes and flushes, and the young woman that flushes and flushes......

such echoes can be seen and found in a number of other poems of Whitman too.

So Whitman sings of both soul and Body. He sings of the Soul for he knows that the real life beyond the earth is that of the spirit. He sings of sex because he sees that the real life in the American society is that of sex alone. It should not be forgotten that unlike for Indians for the Americans sex has nothing to do with religion. Their morals are different from those of ours. Hence we should not be suprised to see a blend of soul and body together in him. Most poets of *Bhakti* period, such as Ghananand in Hindi sang of body and soul together, so did Surdass.

Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864)

Q. 50. Account for Hawthorne's being the most modern of the nineteenth century American novelists.

Or

Dis:uss Hawthorne as a novelist.

Ans With his publication of *The Scarlet Letter* Nathaniel Hawthorne was assured of a place in literature by the side of the great writers. But it is recently that he has been recognized as having essential kinship with the modern age and its spirit. Hawthorne's ability at character-drawing, his powerful way of unfolding a story and his interesting, though quaint style have all contributed to his greatness as a novelist. But the greatest secret of his appeal has been his remarkable depiction of the effect of sin on the human psyche. Despite the tone of gloom that pervades the novel, *The Scarle Letter* was immediately successful. James Joyce recalls the great impact that the book had on the American public, "the sensation the book produced, and the little shudder with which people alluded to it, as if a peculiar horror were mixed wtth its attractions." In the words of Joyce "the publication of *The Scarlet Letter* was in the United States a literary event of the first importance. The book was the finest piece of imaginative writing yet put forth in the country. There was a consciousness of this in the welcome that was given to it—a satisfaction in the idea of America having produced a novel that belonged to literature, and to the forefront of it Something might at last be sent to Europe as exquisiste in quality as anything that had been received, and the best of it was that the thing was absolutely American, it belonged to the soil, to the air; it came out of the very heart of New Eng and."

James Joyce finds several things about Hawthorne's great novel that demand praise : 'The book is beautiful, extraordinary' and has that 'indefinable purity and lightness of conception,' which is the sign of a work of genius. James finds it also praisworthy that Hawthorne has not dwelt on the common aspects of a state the one—the eternal triangle. He has chosen to begin the story long after the sin of the heroine has been committed thus shifting the emphasis from the deed itself to the effect of the deed. "The situation is the situation after the woman's fault has been committed, and the current of expiation and repentance has set in. In spite of the relation between Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale no story of love was surely ever less of a "love story." To Hawthorne's imagination the fact that these two persons had loved each other too well was of an interest comparatively vulgar ; what appealed to him was

the idea of their moral situation in the long years that were to follw. The story indeed, is in a secondary degree that of Hester Prynne ; she becomes really, after the first scene an accessory figure it is not upon her the denouement depends. It is upon her guilty love that the author projects most frequently the cold, thin rays of his fitfully-moving lantern, which makes here and there a little luminous circle, on the edge of which hovers the livid and sinister figure of the injured and retributive husband. The story goes on for the most part, between the lover and the husband the tormented young Puritan minister, who carries the secret of his own lapse from pastoral purity locked up beneath an exterior that commends itself to the reverence of his flock, while he sees the softer partner of his guilt standing in the full glare of exposure and humbling herself to the misery of atonement—between this more wretched and pitiable culpr t, to whom dishonour would come as a comfort and the pillory as a relief and the older, keener wiser man, who to obtain satisfaction for the wrong he has suffered, devises the infernally ingenous plan of conjoining himself with his wronger, living with him, living upon him: and while he pretends to minister to his hidden ailments and to sympathise with his p in, revels in his unsuspected knowledge of these things, and stimulates them by malignant arts. The attitude of Roger Chillingworth, and the means he takes to compensate himself—these are the highly original elements in the situation that Hawthorne so ingenously treats."

What James has pointed out as the outstanding merits of the novel is apprecited by the modern reader too. Hawthorne's memorable characters appeal to the imagination of the readers by their vividness and power while sharing Henry James' views on the distinctions of the novel the mordern reader in fact can discern many things in Hawthorne which James failed to, simply because he was not among the mordern people with their a cquaintance with new psychological theories and a certain temperament or mood steeped in alienation and bitterness that Hawthorne appeals more strongly to the sensibility of our time than to the people of Henry James' period or earlier, is something strongly felt by critics. Hyatt A Waggoner writes, bringing out this truth. "Since our age is an age that has found irony, ambiguity and paradox to be central not only in literature but in life. it is not surprising that Hawthorne has seemed to us one of the most *modern* of nineteenth-century American writers. The bulk and general excellence of the great outburst of Hawthorne's criticism of the past decade attest to his relevance for us. It requires no distortion of him to see him not only foreshadowing Henry James in his concern for "the deeper psychology" but as first cousin to Faulkner and Robert—Penn Warres. In all essentials *My Kinsman, Major Molineax* is as "modern" a story as the *Bear*. Hawthorne's themes especially, link him with the writing and sensibility of our time."

It has been pointed out that the two important ideas that Hawthorne's books were concerned with, are those of alienations and initiation. And these two ideas have been haunting the imagination of almost all great modern novelists, Hemingway and Faulkner especially. Hawthorne, though full of moral and religious concerns was apt to look upon moral and religious questions in subjective and psychological manner. His portrayal of sin is also psychological rather from the religious or Puritan point of view. Hawthorne refused to simplify the whole question of sin and was concerned with 'guilt feelings that have personal and social causes and curses that are objectively real, not merely subjective or irrational." He thus established a strong connection between the psycholgical and the moral and the religious and this is one of the major reasons why Hawthorne's works are so relevant to the present times. Waggoner points out Hawthorne's essential kinship to the existential writers.........his (Hawthorne's) concern with matters moral and religious is existential. Like the existentialist philosophers who articulate the sensibility of our time, Hawthorne is more concerned with the experienced toothache than with orthodontic theory. Like them he explores the nature of existential guilt, relating it to alienation, reunion and commitment. Like them too he distrusts the claim of objective reason to be able to arrive at humanly relevant truth.

Henry James has been highly critical of Hawthorne's use of symbolism. He writes: "In *The Scarlet Letter* there is a great deal of symbolism there is I think too much. It is overdone at times, and becomes mechanical ; it ceases to be impressive and grazes triviality. The idea of the mystic letter "A" which the young minister finds imprinted upon his breast and eating into his flesh, in sympathy with the embroidered badge that Hester is condemned to wear appears to me a case in point." Bnt Hawthorne writing in the nineteenth century was not aware of the post- Jamesian rule in fiction, the formula that has been "Don't tell, show." He is Pre-James and 'Pre Flaubert.' For he both tells and shows throughout his novel. Hawthorne's style too though effective for his narrative does not strike us as modern att all. It is not as modern as Thoreau's. Even at the time when Hawthorne wrote it, his style was old fashioned. A critic has described Hawthorne's style thus : "It is very deliberate with measured rhythms, marked by formal decorum. It is a public style and, as we might say, a rhetorical one. It often perfers the abstsract or generalised to the concrete or specific word." Hence when compared to the informal, concrete, colloquial, imaginative style that the modern writers of fiction have made us familiar with, Hawthorne's style is decidedly pre-modern.

But it is not style alone that contributes to the appeal of a novelist. The present age has found Hawthorne vitally important for other reasons. Many things about the book which appeared

negative qualities to Hawthorne's contemporaries appear to the moderns as positive merits. The gloom of the novel that was frowned upon is accepted by the modern readers. His preoccupation with nature and consequence of guilt and alienation which struck earlier generations as morbid, is understood by readers who are familiar with the hopelessness of the books of Kafka, Canus, and Sartre "we are prepared today," writes a critic "even for his special blend and alternation of light and darkness. Tillich and the religious existentialists have taught us enough about the dynamics of faith to enable us to respond naturally to a writer who explored the darkness to the very limits of the town searching for a trustworthy light. Perhaps no nineteenth-century American writer today seems so likely to reward re-reading as Hawthorne."

Q. 51. Stanley Williams in the Literary History of the United States calls Hawthorne "the founder of the psychological novel in America." How far does 'The Scarlet Letter' justify this title ?

Ans. Though Nathaniel Hawthorne contibuted much to the fiction of America, he is remembered today mainly as the author of *The Scarlet Letter*. This book has had so great an impact on the world of literature that it has some times been described as the 'greatest book ever written in the Western Hemisphere.'

Hawthorne's imagination brooded over the past and the figures that appeared in puritan America. He was quite good at recapturing the atmosphere of the period which he chose as the setting for his novels. But it is not as a historical novel that we remember *The Scarlet Letter* today : we cherish it rather as a brilliant psychological novel, unrivalled in its penetrating study of the human mind. When Hawthorne started writing, the popular taste was all for romantic histories and grand epics which offered heroic characters in splendid scenes The historical romances of Sir Walter Scott and James Fenimore Cooper had won the reading public entirely. These novels satisfied the public not so much by convincing characterisation, as by spectacular elements and melodramatic situations. There was no subtlety in character-delineation for characters were merely stereotypes, the gallant, brave dashing hero fighting against tha all black villain The heroine was all sweetness and purity and very often the perfect damsel in distress. Hawthorne was well-acquainted with these characters for he was familiar with the literature of his time. He did not entirely discard these conventional figures of fiction; rather he accepted such conventions and transformed them. Hawthorne preferred for his book the term 'romances' to 'novels.' He called his books psychological romance and proclaimed that what he aimed at doing was to "burrow into the depths of our common nature." Hence he has given to the

characters a depth and psychological intensity undreamt of in the fiction before him.

Hawthorne displays a deep psychological insight into the accumulation of details about various characters in the pages of *The Scarlet Letter*. In this book he minutely analyses the inner workings in the minds of main characters, and their impact upon their deeds and personalties It is here again that the internal working of the minds of main characters is shown. Now we shall discuss the internal working of the minds of the characters individually:—

1. Hester Prynne and the Working of Her Mind

It is not the purpose of the novelist to depict the custom-ridden society which crushes the physical weight of Hester Prynne. That is the external aspect of her suffering. What is more important is her strong will and passion. Accroding to David Levin, "She is a complex figure and Hawthorne sees that her natural vigour must also lead her into further trouble. In being faithful to what he called the truth of the human heart Hawthorne had to see that the most insteresting battle was not between the heart itself. Hester is not properly penitent. She compounds the sin of passion with the sin of pride She embroiders the scarlet letter as an elaborate ex ression of ambiguous defiance and guilt, and she dresses her daughter in equally flamboyant colours."

She has been psychologically treated. She recalls the memories of past life while standing at the scaffold. This is a view of her past when compared to her present. The pictures of her parents, of the Old World, and of her England village come up before her eyes at a time of harsh punishment. Taken back to prison, she suffers a nervous breakdown which should be viewed as a reaction of her calm and serene endurance of disgrance on the scaffold.

After her return from Boston she is full of repentance. This too is a self-realization prompted by the dictates af her own mind. The novelist has also shown her inner conflict. For example, "Thus, Hester Prynne, whose heart had lost its regular and healthy throb, wandered without a clue in the dark labyrinth of mind."

2. Arthur Dimmesdale and the Working of His Mind

In the delineation of Dimmesdale too Hawthorne shows his deep psychological knowledge and interest. His psychology is the best example of his being the founder of the psychological novel. He is a remarkable study in psychology. The secret of his sin burns within him prompting him to confess. Yet Dimmesdale is afraid to reveal himself for what he is. Hence his attempts at confession remain as veiled suggestion of his own unworthiness which really win for him greater admiration. Thus he goes deeper and deeper into the pit of sin for he violates the Puritan belief that a man must be a true confessor. As in the case of Hester, we find that

Dimmesdale's sin is not the simple one of adultery, but a more complex one. But sin eats into him and as an outward symbol he is forced to se r the letter into his flesh. He has taken thirst for self-torture, both physical and mental, as he is goaded on by an impulse for self torture. The sure way in which Hawthorne goes on exploring the soul of this young minister is unparallel in all literature for psychological interest, except in the work of Dostovesky whom Hawthorne resembles.

The depiction of Dimmesdale's self-agony, self-torture, inner conflict to confess or not to confess his sin publicly, his Hamlet-like delay in confessing his acts, his remorse, his penance and penitence, his behaviour on the scaffold, his constant introspection make the novel a fine psychological study of human mind. In the first part of the novel he is coward, weak, infirm, indecisive, tormented, haunted, and hypocritical, but in the second part (if the novel is to be divided into two equal parts) he becomes self-conscious, retributive, determined, brave, bold, unpretentious, and truly penitent. This mental development is to be traced along the psychological borders, as Hawthorne has explained in the quoted passage.

The two chapters—"The Interior of a Heart" and "The Minister's Vigil", that is Chapters XI and XII—of the novel are indeed very pertinent psychological study of a character unknown in America of the days of Hawthorne.

3. Roger Chillingworth and the Working of His Mind

Roger Chillingworth is the worst sinner in *The Scarlet Letter*. He is a hypocrite and a conceited fellow. He is a cunning man who has sold his soul to dogs. He is an unpardonable sinner of Hawthorne. He is full of revenge, and is malicious. He himself is a psychologist. He confesses his sense of wrong to Hester in the prison. It was a mistake on his part to have induced a young girl to marry him in his old age. The analysis of his own self given by him is the best example of a psychological portraiture : "I, a man of thought, the book-worm of great libraries, a man already in decay, having given my best years to feed the hungry dream of knowledge, what had I to do with youth and beauty like thine own ; misshapen from my birth-hour, how could I delude myself with the idea that intellectual gifts might veil physical deformity in a younger girl's fantasy ! Men call me wise. If sages were even wise in their own behoof, I might have foreseen all this."

"The character of Chillingworth is made all the more sinister by making him dabble in black magic. He collects herbs and roots to give them a touch or spell. His fame as a doctor is partly accountable to his power of working wonders over his medicines and patients. On the whole, Chillingworth is a searching type of character, even though it means his own isolation and destruction."

4. Pearl and Her Conduct

Even in the depiction of little Pearl, Hawthorne gives evidence of his deep grasp of human nature. He calls her "a born misfit of the infantile world." All the factors concerning her birth and upbringing make it inevitable that Pearl should be what according to modern psychology is a problem child. Pearl is pictured as an abnormal girl. She is extra-ordinary sportive, brisk, witty, oracular and taxing. Even her mother feels irritated and nervous at her persistent questionings She is not amenable to any discipline or rule. She is influenced by heredity, by her parents who are both sinners. She is a constant tormentor to her mother by reminding her of the flaney letter on her gown. She ofte i asks her about its meaning. She also wants to know if her mother had ever met the Black Man in the wood. She consciously tells nothing about her maker when Mr. Wilson examines her in Bellingham's hall. In a nutshell, Hawthorne has shown remarkable subtlety in portraying Pearl and in studying the case of an abnormal child.

Conclusion

Thus we find that the entire edifice of the novel rests on sure foundations of human psychology. Even the introduction of symbols in the novel enhances its psychological effect, for it is based on the Puritan's habit of interpreting every natural phenomenon as an expression of God's will. About Hawthorne's achievement in "The Scarlet Letter" David Levin Writes: "Hawthorne brought to the American novel an admirable talent for symbolism and a serious interest in historical fidelity, psychological truth, and social order. No English or American novelist before him had been able to represent so convincingly the feelings and thoughts of a passionate woman and scarcely any American novelis. had posed such forcefully critical question for prevailing 19th century beliefs. It is easy to understand therefore, why Herman Melville greeted Hawthorne's work with a "shock of recognition." Also in many other stories of his, like "The House of Seven Gables" and "The Minister's Black Veil," etc we see Hawthorne's probing interest in psychology. A study of all his works (*Twice-Told Tales.* 1837, *Mosses from an Old Manse'* 1846, *The House of the Seven Gables* 1851, *The Marble Faun etc.*) reveals the fact that Hawthorne's great subject was the human soul. Occasionally his books deal with sensational material like poisoning, murder and adultery but the violence is always subdued or remote and the sensational note is always turned down. The psychological and moral tones remain dominant. This is best illustrated in "The Scarlet Letter" which though based on an act of carnal love, is singularly free from erotic or passionate elements. In this novel Hawthorne was particularly interested in exploring the result of sin, the effect on the human conscience of guilt, pride egotism and isolation. The effect of sin on four different persons

is traced with great dexterity. An interpretation of the characters placed in such unfortunate circumstance would not be possible for Hawthorne if he did not have a sure grasp of the Puritan morality and the Puritan way of life. T. S. Eliot has said about Hawthorne : "Hawthorne had.........the firmness, the true coldness, the hard coldness of the genuine artist. In consequence, the observance of moral life in *The Scarlet Letter*, in *the House of the Seven Gables*, and even in some of the tales and sketches has solidity, has permanence of art. It will always be of use. The work of Hawthorne is truly a criticism.........of the Puritan morality of the Transcendentalist morality and of the world which Hawthorne knew. It is a criticism as Henry James's work is a criticism of the America of his times and as the work of Turgeney and Flaub.rt is a criticism of the Russia and the France of theirs."

Q. 52. Discuss 'The Scarlet Letter' as a story of sin, crime and punishment.

Ans. *The Scarlet Letter* is a grim story of crime and punishment. Its central theme is sexual crime and punishment thereon. It is the cowardice saga of persons committing adultery which involves not only a penal crime but also a moral degradation. It is an outrage of one individual against another and against the social code of ethics. In the Bible it has been written : "Thou shalt not commit adultery." It is God's seventh Commandment. And those who violate it are sinners. So *The Scarlet Letter* is a story of sin also. That is why Hester and Dimmesdale who commit adultery cannot be forgiven.

'Tae Scarlet Letter' takes us to the early days of the Puritan settlement at Massachusets. The book derives its title from the custom strictly practised by the Puritan settlers, that a woman caught in adultery was to wear the letter 'A' embroidered in scarlet on her dress. The novel begins with a scene on a summer morning in Boston. A young woman Hester Prynne stands at the Scaffold in the market place of Boston. She stands in disgrace and tries to hide the scarlet letter 'A' on her gown, by holding her child close. Hester, a gentlewoman is made to endure this shame as she has borne a child, while her husband has been thought lost at sea for a long time. Hester stands quietly and outwardly calm, she watches the crowd that stare at her through scornful eyes. It is said that Hester escaped death or branding by the intercession of the pious young minister Reverend Arther Dimmesdale. The chief ministers of the community urge her to confess the name of her lover, who should be sharing her shame with her. The one who most fervently urges Hester to reveal the name of her partner in guilt is Dimmesdale. But Hester remains silent. Her calm gives place to great mental agitation when among the crowd, she detects

an elderly and almost deformed man whom she had married not out of love but out of sheer helplessness. Hester, the daughter of an old but impoverished family, had married an elderly scholar. The couple had stayed in Antwerp for some time and two years back Hester was sent to Massachusetts colony. The idea was that her husband would soon follow her but it was thought that his ship was wrecked and he himself killed. Now, however, he turns up just in time to witness the shame that his young wife has brought upon herself and on him. Seeing his wife on the scaffold he decides to conceal his identity and hastily puts his finger to his lips to warn Hester against betraying the slightest sign of recognition.

After the time fixed for her public disgrace, Hester is taken back to the prison. She is in a state of high nervous excitement. A doctor is called to attend to her and it turns out to be none other than her husband who has assumed the name of Chillngworth. He tries to get the name of Hester's lover, but when she refuses to tell him, swears that he will stay in town practising medicine, and will sooner or later find out the guilty one. He befriends the clergyman Dimmesdale and while tre ting the sick minister the physician worms out the guilty secret from the minister--namely that he is the father of Hester's child Pearl The soul of Dimmesdale in shame and agony tries to find relief in vague confessions of guilt which his congregation take to be further evidence of his righteousness, One night the tortured young man walks to the scaffold where Hester has stood alone with her child. Soon the mother and child pass that way and Dimmesdale calling them to him makes them stand at the pillory with him. This significant gesture is observed by Chillingworth and its meaning is certainly not lost upon him.

Hester seeing what soul-destroying effect Chillingworth has on Dimmesdale pleads with her husband to be merciful to the young man. But Chillingworth knows no mercy. Hester then warns Dimmesdale against his physician. Together they make a desperate plan to flee to the old world. They decide to leave on Election Day after the sermon preached by Dimmesdale.

The Election Sermon is much praised by the congregation. The church being full, Hester and Pearl stand at the scafold hearing the young minister's sermon. After the sermon while the procession moves out of the church Dimmesdale walks like a man in a dream. He sees Hester and Pearl and taking them by the hand climbs the steps to the pillory. In a deep and impressive voice he proclaims his guilt to the astounded congregation. Tearing open his ministerial band he exposes his breast to the gaze of the people. There is seen the scarlet letter 'A' imprinted on the flesh. Reverend Dimmesdale falls dead on the platform.

Chillingworth's pursuit of revenge is thus over. Frustrated by this open confession of the minister, which Chillingworth tried

hard to prevent. the physician dies within the year leaving his wealth to Pearl. Hester leaves the colony for a while, but returns later to become a ministering angel to those in distress. The scarlet letter on her gown is transfigured into an object of reverence, because of her goodness and kindness: when she dies her wish is that her tomb should be inscribed only with the letter 'A'.

Dimmesdale is a greater sinner than Hester First, he goes against the purity of his profession ; secondly, he tries to conceal his crime from the public. He adds hypocrisy to his sin. But though hypocrisy can save him from social dishonour into which he is afraid he might fall after the exposure of his crime, it is helpless in remedying his spiritual hurts. Dimmesdale surrenders to a second 'fall' when he accepts Hester's proposition of the flight. His conscience allows him no rest ; he gets constant trouble from his soul. He is restless and peaceless ; he cannot sleep soundly ;he cannot sit or study peacefully in his room ; he burns midnight oil over writing sermons ; he keeps fast and vigils ; he scourges himself when he is all alone. But all this is of no avail.

The young minister Dimmesdale, tormented by his awareness of his own sin is another remarkable study in psychology. The secret of his sin burns within him prompting him to confess. Yet Dimmesdale is afraid to reveal himself for what he is Hence his attempts at confession remain as veiled suggestions of his own unworthiness which really win for him greater admiration Thus he goes deeper and deeper into the pit of sin for he violates the Puritan belief that a man must be a true confessor. As in the case of Hester, we find that Dimmesdale's sin is not the simple one of adultery, but a more complex one. But sin eats into him and as an outward symbol he is forced to sear the letter into his flesh. He has keen thirst for self-torture, both physical and mental The sure way in which Hawthorne goes on exploring the soul of this young minister is unparallel in all literature for psychological interest, except in the work of Dostovesky whom Hawthorne resembles.

If we may make use of the idea of a gradation of sin in the novel we find that Chillingworth is the greatest sinner. He is made to represent Hawthorne's idea of the unpardonable sinner. Hawthorne believed that the greatest sin of all is "the violation of another soul, another heart, simply for the purpose of finding out how it would react " Chillingworth is cut out admirably for the role of a man who commits this sin. The way in which he broods over revenge and marks down his victim, and drives him steadily to self-destruction is made very creditable. Chillingworth's actions seem not at all surprising when we remember that he is a man who has deliberately isolated himself. When he learns of Hester's shame his one desire is to remain withdrawn from it all. He denies his very identity and pursues revenge. The character of Chillingworth is made all the more sinister by making him an expert in

black magic. He is shown also as one devoted to cold science, we are, no doubt, to trace in our imagination Chillingworth's kinship to the inhuman doctor of Hawthorne's short story "Rappaccini's Daughter."

The shadow of the parents' sin can be seen on the child of Hester, that is, Pearl She is a born misfit of the infantile world. She is to become a problem child.

Thus *The Scarlet Letter* is a tragic story of crime, sin and punishment. Hawthorne's concept of evil and sin was a puritan heritage ; it was his constant theme He is not much concerned with the causes of sin as with the consequences of sin. For him, evil was something inherent in man's nature.

In *The Scarlet Letter*, the consequences of guilt are primarily psychological in nature. A sense of guilt generates a feeling of loneliness. and the author shows how painful is the Hester's loneliness. In her case, it leads her to "defiance and rebellion" In this we also come to know that secret sin is more painful and far more consumming than the openly acknowledged sin like that of Hester.

Q. 53. Write a character-sketch of Hester Prynne in 'The Scarlet Letter'.

Ans. Hester Pryme is the heroine of the psychological romance called *The Scarlet Letter*. She is the exemplification of the Puritan principle that the wages of sin are death, and the Biblical Commandment "thou shalt not commit adultery." She is as good a tragic heroine as Tess of Hardy or Becky Sharp of Thackeray. She may also be compared to the tragic heroines of Shakespeare. Tall, regal, sombre-eyed, black-haired, her peronsality gives an impression of calm and strength. If there is a hint of voluptuousness in her, there is also a great deal of domesticity. In her skill with the needle, in her reposeful guidance of Pearl, in her wide control of the minister's hysterical emotions, in her interviews with him and with her child——she is a true woman born to comfort and command.

When we first meet her in the story, she has already committed an act of adultery, which was sinful and shamful in the puritan atmosphere of those days in that community. So she is punished with hot iron-branding on her forehead. She has to live for three hours on the scaffold exposed to public dishonour, and to wear a scarlet letter in the shape of 'A' on her bosom throughout her life.

She has extra-ordinary power of endurance She climbs the scaffold bravely ; she is undaunted ; she puts on the scarlet letter in the face of an angry public. She is made an object of fun.

Children are afraid of her as a witch ; the clergyman exhorts her in the street; the priest delivers in the church a sermon related to her sin ; and strangers gaze at the scarlet letter with awe and curiosity.

Hester is a true tragic heroine. She wins our hearts by virtue of her strength, her candour, her great power of endurance, her deep motherly attachment to Pearl, and her dedication to the reality of suffering. On the scaffold, she displays a haughty dignity towards the crowd there. She does not repent for her act of adultery, and feels no sense of shame, though it was a serious crime in those days. Had she been a citizen of modern America, the things could have been quite different. She is courageous ; she is a rebel ; she does not reveal the name of her partner in her crime. Not only she meets the gallows but also a tortuous society which goes on ill treating her. That is why she develops an indifference to the Scarlet Letter although it is a cross on a nun's bosom.

Any reader of the novel cannot fail to grasp the subtlety and complexity of character delineation that Hawthorne has given. Hester's character may be taken first of all to illustrate Hawthorne's remarkable analysis of human character. Hester is totally unlike the conventional heroines of the novels of the times. She is a very complex figure and hence she is fascinating. Hester's sin, as far as Hawthorne's interpretation of psychology is concerned, is one of excessive passion. This very passion imparts to her character, a strength and vigour that is lacking in Dimmesdale and Chillingworth alike. It is her headstrong passion that leads to her downfall. The shame and agony that she is made to suffer proceeded inevitably from her character. But even after her humiliation Hester does not strike us as truly penitent. To make her so would have been an error. Hawthorne knew human nature too well to commit this. David Levin in his essay on Hawthorne's 'Scarlet Letter' makes this point clear. He writes: "She (Hester) is a complex figure and Hawthorne sees that her natural vigour must also lead her into further trouble. In being faithful to what he called the truth of the human heart, Hawthorne had to see the most interesting battle was not between the heart and the external world but within the heart itself. Hester is not properly penitent. She compounds the sin of passion with the sin of pride. She embroiders the scarlet letter as an elaborate expression of ambiguous defiance and guilt, and she dresses her daughter in equally flamboyant colours. Then when her daughter asks her about the meaning of the letter she lies to the child and thus underlines for us the damaging evasiveness of their relationship " Later we find that Hester changes The evaluation of her character is complete after the death of Dimmesdale. For then she rises above all consid rations of the self. After a period of absence, she returns to New England, truly penitent, because penitence now is no longer thrust upon her but is voluntarily embraced.

It is clear thus that Hawthorne has handled the character of Hester ably. It is interesting to note how he has made use of symbols to underline certain traits in her character. Hawthorne has attributed to his heroine, dark colouring, and a rich valuptuous, oriental characteristic. Her efforts to bridle her passion are suggested by the symbol of her rich dark hair being kept under a tight cap. When she contemplates an escape with Dimmesdale, she is actually trying to throw away the fetters of artificial restraint that the Puritan Society has imposed upon her. Hence her hair is let loose and the scarlet letter is thrown aside and she cries, "The past is gone......see, with this symbol, I undo it all, and make it as (if) it had never been."

Hester has a strong personality. She is a source of strength to others. She is at the back and call of all concerned with her. She is a woman of imagination and artistic taste. She has some 'exotic richness' around her. She is a tragic heroine of great stature. Her physical and mental traits are remarkably individualistic. Her passion gives place to thought, and thought to service of mankind. She is in the loneliness of her cottage a free thinker and speculator. Her morality is different from the conventional one. She is a real, living character in the novel, indeed, a superb creation of Hawthorne.

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Q. 54. Is 'The Scarlet Letter' a romance or novel ? Give your own views.

Ans. Hawthorne was a writer of romances *par excellence*. He called *The Scarlet Letter* a psychological romance. The major difference between a romance and a novel is that of fantasy and reality. The romance is a product of fantasy, fiction and imagination; the novel is a product of fidelity, not only the possible reality, but also the probable reality in the ordinary course of man's experience. In a romance the romancer has more freedom to create an atmosphere to his liking and suitable to his theme without caring for the local colour and verisimilitude. In a novel, however, his scope is limited, and his imagination is tied to certain traditions. Broadly speaking, a romancer enjoys greater liberty in expression than a novelist The work of the novelist is that of human heart; the work of the romancer is that of twilight. The latter is more dreamy than the former. Otherwise a romance too has all those elements which a novel has—plot, characters, theme, narration/dialogues, language and style, and motif.

Hawthorne prefers romances because of certain reasons. He enumerates the eauses : (1) "A cloudy veil stretches over the abyss of my nature" ; (2) "I have, however, no love of secrecy and darkness" ; (3) "the love of the 'twilight', the dreamy" ; (4) "the

recourse to the theme of love or chivalry—the universal passion or aspiration"; (5) secluded nature and life, out off from the reality at large.

Guilt or sin is the main theme of all the romances of Hawthorne. In his *Scarlet Letter, Marble Faun, House of the Seven Gables* and other tales, the subject is guilt. He himself professed that his intention was never the novel which deals with the "probable and ordinary course of man's experience," but to write the romance, a thing of "atmospherical medium," "a legend", with circumstances "of the writer's own choosing and creation," with personages of the author's own "makings or, at all events, of his own mixing." To him a romance was essentially a day dream, and he was ever a dreamer. He wanted the creatures of his brain to play their phantasmagorical roles, without exposing them to too close a comparison with the actual events of real lives. He knew that it was difficult to write a romance about a country where there is no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery, no pictruesque and gloomy wrong. Yet he succeeded in his mission.

Keeping in view Hawthorne's theory and practice *The Scarlet Letter* is a romance. It has been called a "great romance" by Walter Blair. The book may be regarded as a romance because it has been written under the influence of sentimental fiction Its them is the penalty of seduction. Little Pearl is a character of senisbility. The misled feminist and the ministering angel popular in fourth-rate novels are combined in the portrayal of Hester. The Gothic romance exercised its influence upon *The Scarlet Letter.* It adds weirdness and horror to the story. The prison, for example, wears a grim appearance. "The wooden jail was already marked with weather-stains and other indications of age which gave a yet darker aspect to its work of its oaken door looked more anitque than anything else in the New World." Governor Bellingham's house is decorated with strange and seemingly cabalistic figures. Mrs. Hibbins is painted almost as a witch; she talks contently about the Black Man (the Devil) who haunts the forest and with whom she has frequent meetings. Even Pearl is not a normal child, and seems to have some witchcraft in her Hence the book has certainly some element of Gothic romances of horror and terror.

In the writing of *The Scarlet Letter* Hawthorne mostly depended on actual persons, places and incidents pertaining to seventeenth century Boston. Yet the book is not a historical romance in the usual sense of the term, for there are many inductions of the 'marvellous' or the imaginary into the tale. Dimmesdale sees the scarlet letter "A" in the sky when standing on scaffold during his vigil in the night. In the same way Chillingworth sees token of the guilty secret on the breast of the steeping minister. Another such incident of marvel is the revelation of the letter "A" imprinted in Dimmesdale's flesh. A fourth incident

is Pearl's observation that the sunlight is running away from Hester. Then we have the descent of Chillingworth into the regions of hell. Thus there is supernatural element in the book.

Except a few major characters all others in *The Scarlet Letter* are the products of the author's own imagination. For example, Mrs. Hibbins and Mr John Wilson.

Keeping in view the preceding discussion, we can safely regard *The Scarlet Letter* as a romance which reads like a novel. and which really fuses chemically and artistically the elements of the romance with those of the novel.

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Herman Melville (1819-1891)

Q 55. The twentieth century has claimed Herman Melville as one of the few major novelists the United States has produced.— Account for this.

Or

Write a critique of 'Moby Dick', and on its basis evaluate Melville as a novelist

Ans Robert Louis Stevenson declared Melville's books about the South Seas, the best ever written. Yet strangely enough Melville's own contemporaries did not care much for these stories. They were dismissed as unimportant and the author himself was fated to oblivion until the 1920's when he was actually 'rediscovered' and hailed as one of the greatest novelists America ever produced The creative power and the stylistic brilliance of Melville were recognised and ever since the interest in his works has gone on increasingly.

Melville was born in 1819 in New York city. After a brief schooling Melville was compelled to go to sea. Whatever deficiency there was in his education was made up by what he learned at sea. Melville speaks for himself when he makes Ishmael of his novel say that the whale-ship was "my Yale Callege and my Harvard." Life at sea turned out to be of immense profit to Melville when he started writing.The Pacific Ocean which the novelist knew intimately is recaptured in his stories. For a short while Melville returned from sea and lived in New York city and started writing. His first book was *Typee* (1846). Then came *Omoo* (1847) in which he has given a striking picture of Tahitian life. These met with reasonable encouragement. Emboldened thus Melville continued writing, but he soon turned from realism to satire, thanks to the unsympathetic criticism of some reviewers. After his marriage in 1847 Melville wrote *Redburn* (1849) a novel based on his experiences during his first voyage and *Mardi* a satirical work in which he discussed topics of the day such as slavery, the abolition movement and so on. It was at this stage that Melville met Nathaniel Hawthorne. He was working on 'Moby Dick', his masterpiece and the dedication of this great novel to Hawthorne indicates the great influence that Hawthorne had on Melville. 'Moby Dick' was published in 1851 and 'Pierre' in 185.. In 1850 Melville wrote his *White Jacket*, one of the best accounts ever written of the life and duties of a man-of-war's crew. After this one notices in Melville a falling off in standards. He devoted himself to the writing of short stories. *The Piazza Tales*, is Mellville's great collection of short stories and sketches. Among the greatest are 'Benito Cereno,' 'Teste', 'The Lightning Rod Man' etc. Melville's literary activity was not

confined to the writing of short stories and novels. He tried his hand at poetry and in 1865 he published a volume of poems on Civil War themes, which he call d *Batt e Pieces and Aspects of the War*. The collection of poems that appeared under the title *Other Poems* have as themes metaphysical ideas personal reminiscence and confession, art and aesthetics. As a poet Melville shows depth of thought rather than exquisiteness of expression. His poetic art is seldom flawless, and though in technique he may be considered inferior to Longfellow yet he is a far greater poet than Longfellow, because he has tougher and richer mind and far greater energy than Longfellow. **Richard Chase** writes about Melville's verse : "A profound mind is at work in these poems and a mind in vigorous motion. This can be said of only one other American poet of the time, Emily Dickinson, Melville's poetry has not yet been adequaately assessed, but, despite its limitation, it reveals new forms of strength each time we read it over."

The modern admiration for Melville has resulted in an extraordinary variety of critical opinions regarding his works and their interpretations. The critic traces five deforming influences in his literary career : "the religious orthodoxy of his home, which left its imprint, though he revolted from it ; his contact with the brutalities of a sailor's life and with savage societies which impelled him to question the premises of wertern civilization ; his reading in philosophy and bellas lettres,............Rabelais. Sir Thomas Browne, Shakespeare and other Elizabethan dramatists, the Bible and Carlyle ; his friendships with artists and men of letters in New York who advanced his in erests and educated him in his craft ; and the sympathy of Hawthorne, which more than any other factor contributed to the fruition of his genius"*

Among all the works of Melville it is 'Moby Dick' that has earned for its author the great reputation that he now enjoys. When it was published, it was not greeted with much enthusiasm. In fact among the nine novels that Melville wrote, *Moby Dick* was something in between a success and a failure. But according to the modern critical opinion, the work is nothing short of a masterpiece. **Leon Howard** says : "*Moby Dick* is one of those rare works of literature that have a capacity for growth through some inner vitality which increases with time."

The work is a superb mixture of realism and fantasy. It is based on details about the whaling industry of the South Pacific. Briefly the story runs as follows. Ishmael a young schoolmaster stricken with a restless longing to go to sea arrives at New Bedford having made up his mind to go to the Pacific. At the Spouter Inn near the waterfront Ishmael has a strange bed-fellow—Queequeg, a harpooner who looks like a cannibal Contrary to Ishmael's fears Queequeg turns out to be a friendly soul and together they sign

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* *The Literature of the United States.*

up as harpooners on the vessel the 'Pequod', Captain Ahab of the 'Pequod' is a stern man. Ishmael learned that one of his legs was lost in an earlier encounter between the Captain and the fierce whale known to the whalers as Moby Dick. A deep scar on the face of the Captain added to his sinister expression. Ahab burns with the hatred of Moby Dick and he offers a handsome reward in gold to the first man who sights the great white whale. The ship's mates are anxious about the outcome of this mad chase for Moby Dick, but they seem to be strangely under the spell of Captain Ahab to whom there is no alternative but to chase his sworn enemy and destroy him. At last after days of fierce activity on the sea and grappling with the storm, the dreaded white whale is sighted. The confrontation between Captain Ahab and the whale last for three days. In this fierce conflict 'Pequod' is shattered, and Ahab killed. All the crew perish except Ishmael who survives to narrate, the saga of hatred and revenge.

This is the story which Melville has worked out into an epic of the sea. The strength of the book lies among other things, in Melville's vivid narration of the conflict, the conflict between the notorious white whale and the mutilated Captain obsessed with the thought of destroying his antagonist With Melville's knowledge of the sea and his acquaintance with the whaling industry it was easy for him to lend verisimilitude to a theme that was of epic and fantastic proportions. He follows several methods to make the pursuit plausible. The first is giving the reader a wealth of circumstantial details in the form of a factually accurate description of all the intricacies associated with whale hunting...the elaborate preparation of the equipment, the harpooning. the killing and cutting up of the whale, the melting of the blubber into oil. To all these details Melville has added the latest scientific details regarding the habits of the sperm-whale. With such realistic details are blended reports of the fabulous beast, the white humped monster who has become notorious among the sailors. Melville's successful technique in fact is to blend realistic details with characters of epic grandeur and action that seems to be fabulous. Inspite of the effect of verisimilitude therefore, one cannot call *Moby Dick* a work of naturalism.

The language that Melville has made use of is strikingly in keeping with the grandeur of theme and action. The rhetoric is romantic, the language suggestive and symbolic and full of brilliant evocative power. The descriptions of the sea are powerful and awe-inspiring, meant to evoke in the reader an experience that is quite unforgettable. From the time of Beowulf we find that the sea has kept its hold on literature and Melville's book is one of the most striking tales of the sea. It is filled with 'the lore of the sea and of old whale-haunting days' and the descriptions of the seaman with their loud shouts and their rough ways lend ruggedness to a theme that is itself one of unique strength and vitality.

The dramatic conflict in the novel has been interpreted by many critics in various ways. The book has been much commented upon and each reader may find in it something new, a meaning which another may not detect. It is generallyy believed that the novel is an allegory and that Moby Dick symbolizes brute malice, universal power or the malvolence of deity itself. Early in life Melville developed an attitude to life that was dark and brooding and in this mood he found himself responding splendidly to Shakespearean tragic vision. Life on the sea revealed to him a world of horror, suffering and evil that he had not dreamt of before, and in his mind there developed a tragic sense of life, a gloomy view of man. He was drawn to Nathaniel Hawthorne, for Hawthorne's 'blackness' like Shakespeare's tragic characters excited Melville's imagination Melville always believed that nineteenth century America would produce a writer of Shakespear an stature. But he maintained that such a writer was more likely to be a novelist than a dramatist and that he would be quite daring and frank in revealing the dark sides of life. This is the reason why Hawthorne's novels and Shakespearean tragedy exerted such influence on Melville's imagination. His book *Moby Dick* may be considered as half a Shakespearean play at times, in its characters, soliloquies, stage-directions, and all. In Captain Ahab we detect traces of both Hamlet and King Lear. Lear defying the wildest forces of nature, and Hamlet looking upon external things as heiroglyphics were both characters that fascinated Melville. Into Ahab's making, therefore, there went traits of both Lear and Hamlet. Melville described his protagonist as being "formed for the noblest tragedies." The antagonist is Moby Dick, the white whale, the largest and most powerful creature of nature described as "the monomaniac incarnation of all those malicious agencies which some deep men feel eating in them, till they are left living on with half a heart and half a lung." This symbol or incarnation of all the malice and evil in the world is the sworn enemy of Ahab and the conflict between them is one that is bound to end in the death and destruction of one or the other. This conflict gaining momentum and enduring in a spectacular climax gives high dramatic intensity to the novel.

The character of Captain Ahab is an enduring proof of Melville's power of characterisation. He can easily be placed side by side with the immortal tragic heroes of Shakespeare or of Thomas Hardy. With grandeur of personality, fierce determination and an inexorable will and the inevitable 'tragic flaw' he is eminently fitted to be a tragic hero. Around this singularly imposing figure we find a host of other characters all drawn vividly and realistically. Ishmael, the narrator of the tale is himself an unforgettable figure. Melville has given him the name Ishmael deliberately to suggest his character, for the name is the symbol of his position as an outcast wanderer. Ishmael is not merely an observer of the fatal conflict between Ahab and the mighty beast,

he is a philosoher in his own way and has a fairly good knowledge of literature. In the course of the novel, we find him dwelling at length on such profound topics as free will, predestination and damnation. Of all those who set out on the fatal expedition on board the 'Pequod' it is Ishmael who is most fit to play the role of the survivor, for he is something of a Greek Chorus.

Queequeg the tattoced veteran harpooner, Fedallah the parsee servant of Ahab whose predictions come true, and Starbuk the mate are all memorable characters. But the most fascinating character is certainly the huge leviathan, whose name has become familiar to all now. Whether regarded as a real whale or as a symbol into which one may read many meanings, there is no denying the fact that Moby Dick is the most captivating animal depicted in fiction.

Moby Dick is of interest for yet another reason. It reflects a conflict that raged within the author's mind. Though drawn for a while to Transcendentalism, Melville was cured of his enthusiasm for this when he came into contact with Hawthorne. Critics like Leon Howard point out how this struggle is important in the novel: "There is one fascinating chapter in *Moby Dick* called 'the whiteness of the whale' which in fact shows Melville struggling against his own convictions by trying to find evidence of some sort of knowledge, in man and beasts, that transcended inductive knowledge based on experience. But the struggle affected the whole of the book. It lies back of the contrast between fevour and factuality which are observable in his treatment of incident and in his style. It is to be found in the puzzling position of the story, who is sometimes a detached observer and commentator but who is often completely consumed in the heat of the action. It leads to all sorts of ambivalences and ambiguities, conflicting implications and suggestive symbolism which Melville did not bother—and probably would not have been able to clarify. The tension of an intellectual conflict within Melville himself provides a dramatic texture for the whole narrative."* It would not be far-fetched to find in the book an expression of the conflict that was characteristic of the age.

Moby Dick is certainly the result of an extraordiary creative urge when the author is said to have exclaimed: "Give me Vesuvius's crater as an ink-stand!" Melville said that his great work was 'broiled in hell-fire.' This has given to the book a living vitality and a power and grandeur that cannot be abetted by time. "*Moby Dick*," writes **Mareus Cunliffe** "is one of the world's greatest novels, whose richness increases with each new reading."

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* Leon Howard

Q. 56. In the ordinary sense 'Moby Dick' is hardly a novel, but the book is great enough to create its own category. Elaborate and discuss.

Or

'Moby Dick' is not a novel in the then European sense of the term and yet a book for which no other term exits. Discuss.

Or

"As an epic, 'Moby Dick' follows in some ways the universal convention to which it belongs". (Richard Chase). Discuss.

Ans. *Moby Dick* is a unique book of its kind. It is *sui generis*. It is a story-book, a tale of adventures, a novel, an epic romance, a fable, a moral allegory, not each thing separately, but all together. It is a complex book, representing the structure of modern art It combines philosophy, psychology, theology and morality. It is the product of a transcendental soul.

The spaciousness of theme and subject, the martial atmosphere, the association of the homely and savage materials with universal myths, the symbolic wanderings of the hero, the indispensable strength of such a hero in Captain Ahab impel us to regard the work as an epic. But the epic is in prose. What distinguishes *Moby Dick* from modern prose fiction is the fact that its writer is not interested in the meanness, the literal truthfulness, the representative slice of life which are the characteristics of the modern realistic novels.

"Call me Ishmael," the book begins. "This Ishmael is not only a character in the book; he is also the single voice, or rather the single mind, from whose endlessly turning spool of thought the whole story is unwound. It is Ishmael's contemplativeness, his dreaming, that articulates the wonder of the seas and the fabulousness of the whale and the terrors of the deep. All that can be meditated, summed up and hinted at, as the reflective essence of the story itself, is given to us by Ishmael, who possesses nothing but man's specifically human gift, which is language. It is Ishmael who tries to sum up the whole creation in a single book and yet keeps at the centre of it one American whaling voyage. It is Ishmael's gift for speculation that explains the terror we come to feel before the whiteness of the whale; Ishmael's mind that ranges with mad exuberance through a description of all the seas; Ishmael who piles up image after image of 'the mightiest animated mass that has survived the flood." It is Ishmael who, in the wonderful chapter on the masthead, embodies for us man as a thinker, whose reveries transcend space and time as he stands watch high above the seas."

Moby Dick is a book which is neither a saga, though it deals in large natural forces, nor a classical epic, for we feel too strongly

the individual who wrote it. "It is a book that is at once primitive, fatalistic, and merciless, like the very oldest books, and yet peculiarly personal, like so many twentieth-century novels, in its significant emphasis on the subjective individual consciousness. The book grows out of a single word, "I", and expands until the soul's voyage of this "I" comes to include a great many things that are unseen and unsuspected by most of us."

Some scholars have evaluated *Moby Dick* as an epic romance. First, the book is about primitive life, about a 'heroic' age, about a life reminiscent of that led by the Achaean peoples in the days of their folk-wanderings or by the Germanic peoples in the days of theirs; the whole of American life at that time, with all its difference, was something like that. The patterns of its design are epic like. It suggests the threefold design of the *Iliad*, or the sixfold design of the *Odyssey*.

All the introductory chapters, upto the sailing of the *Pequod* on that bleak Christmas day, form a clear and defined movement, like that of the first four books of the *Odyssey*. A second unmistakable wave is the one that comes to its crest in the scene on the quarter-deck, when Ahab nails the doubloon to the main mast. The whole central portion of the book, from the sunset scene in Ahab's cabin to the encounter with the bitterly misnmed craft, the *Delight*, forms a third movement; in this there are surely no breaks so marked as the first two. The fourth movement naturally begins with "The Syphony" and comes to a close with the catastrophe itself—the Epilogue forming a kind of musical coda, not wholly unlike the burning of Hector's body on the funeral pyre in the last few lines of the *Iliad* Furthermore, the principle of variety so characteristic of the epic is also maintained in *Moby Dick*. The subject matter is also archaic : that is the hunt for the whale The theme is the quest. Whereas the setting off and the conclusion have a fictive or mythical element in them, the description of actual details of daily life of the questers provides this epic with its realistic details. Many actions of Ahab can be compared to those of Achilles.

Furthermore, the book makes use of epic similes and images. Meliville's imagery of lances, harpoons, and cutting-spades, of Whale-boats. Whale-lines, and blubber-hooks, of cutting in and trying-out and stowing-down, of javelin and sword, shield and breastplate, ship, and such practical activiti s as sailing, hunting, plowing, and the performance of obligatory rites is epical in nature and content, From time to time Melville launches upon the kind of sustained and formal similes that everyone recognizes as Homeric or Virgilian, and that have in *Moby Dick*, as in the *Illiad* or the *Aeneid*, a grand effect. For example, the simile in which the Whaleman's trained capacity to predict the route or the whale he is chasing is compared to the ordinary citizen's capacity to predict the arrival of a train on "the mighty iron Leviathan of the modern

railway." More pastoral and more traditional than this is the familiar passage that brings together the picture of a school of Right Whales, sluggishly moving through a field of brit, and that of "morning mowers" slowly advancing their scythes through the wet grass of a marshy meadow And the noblest of Melville's epic similes is that in which the great school of Sperm Whales hurrying through the Straits of Sunda is likened to an army accelerating its march through an unfriendly defile in the mountains, "all eagerness to place that perilous passage in their rear." (see the chapter on "The Grand Armada.")

Ahab's wilful distortion of the purpose of his voyage and his breaking of the ship's compass brings about the Pequod's catastrophe. In this context, the forging of Ahab's fateful harpoon duplicates the forging of Achilles's fateful shield in *Illiad* (where Hephaestos is as much a god as a superb blacksmith) and the libation offerings to gods in Homer are the equivalents of weaving of nets, climbing on mast-heads for look-outs, and the rigging of masts in Melville. "A hardy people are celebrated in the very process of snatching their livelihood from nature the Homeric people by mounting attacks on enemies and by hijacking. Melville's whale-men by hunting Whales of spermaceti. It is in this epic sense that *Moby Dick* has to be viewed in order to understand the mythopoeic imagination which put the American whaleman on footing with Achilles, Menelaus, or Hector."

Moby Dick is a romance because of the fictitious element and the use of "I" in the narration, and the subjective note of the characters. Ultimately it is a tale of adventures.

It is because of the above reasons that Richard Chase calls it "an epic romance", following Fielding's definition of novel 'as an epic romance in prose'. Undoubtedly, *Moby Dick* is not a novel in the then European sense of the term.

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Q. 57. Discuss Melville's language and style with special reference to 'Moby Dick'.

Ans. Newton Arvin mentions two special features of Melville's diction : the verbal palette of appropriate atmosphere conjured up, and the coinages, the improvisations, the transpositions of parts of speech (verb-nouns and nouns-adverbs. participial modifiers, pluralized substantives, adjective-compounds, and so on). It is by these devices that he quickens his presentation The dark cluster of his words consists of words such as 'wild,' 'moody', 'mystic,' 'subtle', 'wondrous', 'nameless', 'intense,' 'malicious' and their cognates. The light cluster of his words consists of words such as 'calm,' 'fair', 'mild', 'serene', tranquil', 'cool', 'indifferent', 'noble', 'grand,' 'lovely', 'heavenly.' There are contrasting pairs

of 'joy' and 'woe', 'woolfish' and 'soothing' too. Melville's vocabulary is quite large ; he can coin new words and use sensuous words whenever need be. He has a great image-making power. The narrative of *Moby Dick* abounds in image-making and in rhetorical manipulation of the most provocative sort. Though there are exaggerated repetitions, yet at the same time there are epithetical words which convey a lot of meaning, e. g., 'preluding', 'foreshadowing.'

Moby Dick is an illustration of a packed narrative. Melville tells the story with a wealth of imagery and allusion that charges it with daring implications every moment, e. g. he describes the school of sharks attacking a whale and "thirstily drinking (the whale's blood) at every new gash, as the eager Israelites did at the bursting fountains that poured from the smitten rocks,"—a figure that makes the sharks naturally innocent in their brutality and the Israelites brutally greedy in their spirituality. It is the blending of vivid natural description and metaphysical implication that makes possible the great, haunting chapter called "The Grand Armada", wherein the centre of a frantic whirl-pool of hundreds of whales, the hunters come to a place of absolute calm and, looking down into the clear waters of the Pacific, see an astonishing sight.

Melville wrote in a style that is troublesome, as much because it often attracts us because it sometimes puts off readers by its striking, superficial characteristics. Melville, as stated by **Edmund Wilson**, "embroidered, or, perhaps better coagulated (his) fancies in a peculiarly clogged and viscous prose characteristic of the early nineteenth century, that is (marked by) a self-conscious archaizing, a magniloquence which, though sometimes facetious, has little in common with the eighteenth century ; and both have some connection with the romantic movement."

So Melville's style is heavily decorated with deliberately artificial flourishes, frequently syntactically over-elaborated to the point of incoherence, and, in its diction, often ludicrously inappropriate to the characters and the occasions. He followed the lifeless conventional style of his time. His style is not close to the acutal speech.

The language that Melville has made use of is strinkingly in keeping with the grandeur of theme and action. The rhetoric is romantic, the language suggestive and symbolic and full of brilliant evocative power. The descriptions of the sea are powerful and awe-inspiring, meant to evoke in the reader an experience that is quite unforgettable. From the time of Beowulf we find that the sea has kept its hold on literature and Melville's book is one of the most striking tales of the sea. It is filled with the lore of the sea and of old whale-hunting days and the descriptions of the seaman

with their loud shouts and their rough ways lend ruggedness to a theme that is itself one of unique strength and vitality.

Q. 58. Sketch the characters of Ishmael and Capt. Ahab.

Ans Character of Ishmael

Ishmael is a major character in *Moby Dick*. He is the narrator of the story. He is a school-master, a highly civilized man, and an intellectual, having a foresight and predicting power. He warns Ahab of the consequences of his misadventure ; he is the only survivor of the *Pequod's* crew. It is he who narrates, tells, recalls, considers, meditates, emphasizes, and explains. He identifies and judges matters without trying to impose his own outlook. He is objective.

Ishmael possesses wisdom. His is the case of "wisdom that is woe" whereas Ahab's is "a woe that is madness". He embodies thoughtfulness. He has sharp intelligence and understanding. He is curious and logical. He is tolerant too. He speaks eloquently in defence of Queequeg's religion and speaks early in the book of maintaining a sort of acquaintance with evil, although he himself sides with good. He accepts the world as he finds it, and though he does not have the exuberance of Flask or the joviality of Stubb, he enjoys himself in the world about him Unlike Ahab, he does not run against the current. At the opening of the book he introduces himself :

> "Now, when I say that I am in the habit of going to sea whenever I begin to grow hazy about the eyes, and begin to be over-conscious of my lungs, I do not mean to have it inferred that I ever go to sea as a passenger."
>
> (Chapter I—"Loomings")

At the end of the book, he says :

> "It so chanced, that after the Parsee's disappearance, I was he whom the Fates ordained to take the place of Ahab's bowsman, when that bowsman assumed the vacant post ; the same, who......was dropped a stern."

It is the whiteness of the whale that above all things appalled him. He looked for good. Melville's own view of life seems to be represented in the novel by Ishm el. He is able to see both the beauty and the sadness of life. He shows his awareness of the duality which confronts us wherever we turn.

"Ishmael is not only a character in the book ; he is also the single voice, or rather the single mind, from whose endlessly turning spool of thought the whole story in unwound. It is Ishmael's contemplativeness, his *dreaming*, that articulates the

wonder of the seas and the fabulousness of the whale and the terrors of the deep. All that can be meditated, summed up and hinted at, as the reflective essence of the story itself. is given by Ishmael, who possesses nothing but man's specific human gift, which is language. It is Ishmael who tries to sum up the whole creation in a single book and yet keeps at the centre of it one American whaling voyage. It is Ishmael's gift for speculation that explains the terror we come to feel before the whiteness of the whale ; Ishmael's mind that ranges with mad exuberance through a description of all the seas ; Ishmael who piles up image after image of "the mightiest animated mass that has survived the flood." It is Ishmael who in the wonderful chapter on the masthead, embodies for us man as a thinker, whose reveries transcend space and time as he stands watch high above the seas. And of course it is Ishmael, both actually and as the symbol of man, who is the one survivor of the voyage. Yet utterly alone as he is at the end of the book floating on the Paeific Ocean, he manages, buoyed up on a coffin that magically serves as his life-buoy, to give us the impression that life itself can be honestly confronted only in the loneliness of each human heart. Always it is the emphasis on Ishmael's personal vision, on the richhess and ambiguity of all events as the sceptical, fervent, experience-scarred mind of Ishmael feels and thinks them, that gives us. from the beginning, the new kind of book that *Moby Dick* is," (Richard Chase).

Character of Ahab

Captain Ahab is the hero of *Moby Dick*. He is like Milton's Samson Agonistes or Satan. He has the grandeur of Shakespearean heroes too. He is a tragic hero in the grand tradition, defying fate and all the evil it has to offer until he is destroyed but not defeated. He has the unconquerable enthusiasm and pride of Lord Byron's Cain or Manfred or Milton's Satan or Samson.

Capt. Ahab is the monomanical captain of the *Pequod*. He has a poetic mind filled with imagination. He sets on to hunt the wahle, Moby Dick. . He is ego personified. He is also moody, self-willed old man. He is insane after the hunt, he wants to have revenge on the White Whale which has physically crippled him. He remains out of touch with reality for the most part. He is a mad adventurer. Symbolically he is the redeemer of the wrongs which mankind has suffered from the inhuman world. He has been equated with Christ. In the words of Charles Feidelson, Ahab's voyage is "an intellectual experiment". and that in Ahab's image of the Voyager—the signature of transcendentalism—is at odds with itself. "Ahab is the disappointed transcendentalist, knowing no other way of proceeding but shadowed by imminent failure."

Some other scholars are of the opinion that Ahab's quest is a

quest for justice. In his quest he shows determination, courage, concentration of attention, and all that is needed. Behind Ahab's cry is the fear that man's covenant with God has been broken, that there is no purpose to our existence. Thus he tries to justify the God's ways to man. He also represents the aristocracy of intellect in our democracy, because he seeks to transcend the limitations that good conventional men like Starbuck, philistine materialists like Stubb, and unthinking fools like Flask want to impose on everybody else, Ahab speaks for the humanity that belongs to man's imaginative vision of himself. Just as Ahab is a hero, so *Moby Dick* itself is a heroic book.

"AHAB SINNED AGAINST MAN AND GOD, and like his name sake in the Old Testament, becomes a 'wicked king'. But Ahab is not just a fanatic who leads the whole crew to their destruction; he is a hero of thought who is trying, by terrible force, to reassert man's place in nature. And it is the struggle that Ahab incarnates that makes him so magnificent a voice, thundering in Shakespearean rhetoric, storming at the gates of the inhuman, silent world. Ahab is trying to give man, in one awful, final assertion that has will *does* mean something, a feeling of relatedness with his world."

Ahab's effort, then, is to reclaim something that man knows he has lost. He symbolizes that he is fighing in an unequal contest. He has a heroic temper and courage. Despite the integrity and sanity the considerable strength of Starbuck, despite his protests to the captain, despite Ahab's intense struggle with himself, despite the advice of Ishmael to reject his quest, Ahab follows his quest, totally rejects his instincts, casts of his humanity, even the tool of his craft of navigation; he resolves on his own destruction. He is not just pathetic or grotesque figure. His sacrifice is great; he is a martyr to our cause. He is a fated loser; he carries his personal doom with him, and loves it, for he has no other choice in the quest. Natural laws are still ill operation ; and man has no choice of his o wn.

Ahab represents that spirit of philosophic inquiry which would challenge externalities, seeking a truer or more meaningful world order; he maintains that poetic (metaphoric) outlook which reorders the world to this end. The rejection of existence in the world of paradox and illusion, however, becomes a like rejection of life itself and Ahab, Melville's tragic romantic hero, thus commits himself to his water grave, to Melville's existential philosophy.

Q. 59. Attempt an interpreration of 'Moby Dick' as a "parable of man's struggle against Nature, against evil, against the accidental malice of the Universe, and even against God."

Or

"Moby Dick" is a fable or an allegory of man in a historical predicament." Discuss.

Or

Write a note on the moral significance of 'Moby Dick'.

Or

Comment upon Isolation Versus Interdependence in 'Moby Dick.'

Or

Discuss the allegorical implications of Ahab's tragedy in 'Moby Dick'.

Ans. *Moby Dick* is the epic portrayal of the fish life of America. It is a monumental allegory of a fish hero, a comedy of man with his immediate practical needs. Allegorically it is the exemp ification of the human predicament held by Melville. He depicts the moral plight of our times, In Chapter XLV of *Moby Dick*, Melville says that "they might scout at Moby Dick as a monstrous fable, or still worse and more detestable, a hideous and intolerable allegory."

Events in the main action of the story, the symbolism of the white whale, details of Ahab's character, and the numerous other digressions support the thesis that the novel is a fable, and an allegory. The whale has become in Ahab's mind an incarnation of the world's evil. By killing this monster he would bring mankind into the millennium. To Ishmael the whale is doubtless a symbol of infinitely mutliple significance beyond and full comprehension of any man. The whiteness of the whale has been interpreted variously. It may symbolize goodness, chastity, magnificance, supremacy, joy, innocence, religious purity, divin ity, terror, ghastliness, ill omen, death, and the immense void of the universe. Melville, indeed, depicts the whale as an essentially dualistic creature, a being whose enigmatic motives may some how be related to this dualism. *Moby Dick* in a sense is the exemplification of Milton's philosophy in *Areopagitica*, "Good and evil we know in the field of this world grow up almost inseparably; and the knowledge of good is so involved and interwoven with the knowledge of evil...that those confused seeds that were imposed upon psyche as an incessant labour to cull (out, and sort asunder, were not more intermixed."

"The style is maniacal—mad as a March hare—moving, gibbering, screaming, iike an incurable Bedlamite...a huge dose of hyperbolical slang, maudlin sentimentalism, and tragic-comic

bubble and squeak." The theme of this many-faced book is a universal theme, that is, search or quest. The paradox of human experience is presented in its full ambiguity. It is puritanic. It is epical It is also symbolic.

The story of *Moby Dick* begins with the startling and sobering indentification of its narratoı with the Biblical wanderer, Ishmael, from there proceeding to the brooding gloom of the Spouter Inn and to the doleful sermon of Father Mapple from the lofty Seaman's Bethel. By the time these preliminaries are over and the *Pequod* has set sail, no reader can retain the sense of casual adventure inherent in a story of this nature.

Is Ahab a Christ-figure, or a devil-figure ? Is the giant White Whale the manifestation of goodness and purity or an incarnation of the ultimate blankness of evil ? Such are the questions which would have ambiguous answers. Answers are given by critics both ways. Melville wonders over the senseless deaths of so many innocents by earthquakes, fire, and flood. Why is an innocent chosen to die ? What kind of universe can destroy indiscriminately some two thousand people with the eruption of a volcano, indifferently destroying the innocent with the guilty ? Melville, like Sophocles, like Shakespeare, like Dostoevsky, attempts to fathom far deeper than the response that such things are merely the inscrutable will of Deity.

Moby Dick is a complex book. However, It has no systematic and full-fledged allegory as Spenser's *Faerie Queene* or Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* have. It can be compared to Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress.*

Q. 60. Discuss the symbolism of 'Moby Dick'.

Ans. "*Moby Dick*, which is a mighty book on a mighty theme, has been justly and sufficiently acclaimed as a peerless saga of physical adventure, appealing to young and old just like any other good yarn. Its external action takes place in a world of athletic heroism, the kind of man's world that many girls at one time or another and all boys fervently wish to enter. It is filled with boasting talk, odd characters, rough deeds, alarums, accidents, mysteries, and narrow escapes. The exciting paradox of the fragility of men's bodies and the studiness of their ingenuities is vividly present; and the technical descriptions—of the process of killing a whale, for instance—with their robustly metaphoric picturization and their hall-mark of cleanly observant intimacy with materials and elements, arouse the most imaginative sort of manipulative interest ..."

Once on his adventure, the hero, Ahab has no real interest in a profitable catch of whales. He is obsessed by a desire to seek

out and kill a famous and elusive albino whale called Moby Dick. This Moby Dick – this whale is the symbol of good as well as evil, light as well as darkness, joy as well as sorrow. Like nature the whale is paradoxically benign and malevolent, nourishing and destructive It is massive, brutal, monolithic; but at the same time protean, erotically beautiful, infinitely variable. It signifies death and corruption as well as virginal purity, innocence, and youth. It has the advantage of being, from one point of view, the colour that contains all colours, whereas from another point of view it suggests a *tabula rasa*. Perhaps Melville himself did not know what the whale exactly meant, says D. H. Lawrence. The book offers us two interpretations : Ishmael's and Ahab's. For the former, the whiteness of the Whale symbolizes an 'absence of colour as well as an inclusion of all colours. For Ahab, the Whale concentrates in itself all the malignity and the evil of the world. Most critics interpret the book from the view point of Ahab.

Besides the Whale, one of the important symbols introduced by Melville is ambergris, "an essence found in the inglorious bowels of a sick whale." It signifies corruption. Another powerful symbol is Queequeg's coffin which is converted into a lifebuoy and which at the end of the story providentially saves the life of Ishmael. In fact, *Moby Dick* is a searing and terrible symbolic representation of a profound conflict in the soul of man. It is not merely a physical adventure story. Captain Ahab's soul-ship starts upon the voyage of heaven.

The book is as mighty as the story of Job himself : the confrontation of chaos by man. Ahab fails to recognize evil in himself.

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Q. 61. " 'Moby Dick" is not so much a book about Captain Ahab's quest for the Whale as it is an experience of that quest."

Ans *Moby Dick* is a marvellous adventure story. It is mixed with fantasy, realism and symbolism, psychology and puritanism. It is based on the South Pacific Whaling industry, which was a major commerical activity in mid-19th century Amerca. The narrator (Ishmael) is an outcast wanderer. He boards a whaling vessel in New Bedford and finds himself in a real world of hard work and an unreal world of speculat'on and mystery. The crew represents most of the races of the world. The Captain, in the opinion of the narrator, is mad The other officers are sane enough, but they are completely dominated by the captain's obsessed determinat on to pursue, throughout the world one particular white whale who had previously destroyed the captain's boat and attacked him, leaving him mutilated in body with an artificial leg and injured in mind by the passion for revenge.

Ishmael, the narrator of the story recounts how he went to sea some years ago on a whaling ship. He sets out for Nantucket, the principal whaling port, but he is temporarily delayed in New Bedford, at an inn where he meets and joins forces with a South-Sea Islander, a harpooner named Queequeg. After a weekend in New Bedford they come down to Nantucket and sign on a whaler, the *Pequod*. There are several apparent omens which suggest that they should not sail on the *Pequod*, but ignoring these, they sail off into the winter sea. As the ship embarks, it is under the command of the first mate, Starbuck; the captain, Ahab, keeps below decks, indisposed.

The bulk of the voyage from Nantucket to the Cape of Good Hope is described only t rough implication. The space is largely filled with Ishmael's encyclopediac chronicles of the history and lore of whaling. It adds little to the action until the *Pequod* rounds the tip of Africa and begins to meet other ships and to kill a few whales.

From the Cape of Good Hope up to the Sundra Straits, Ishmael continues his discourses on whaling which are disturbed with whale-killings and visits with other ships; Ishmael uses these incidents to illustrate some of the points he has been making. After the Sundra Straits are passed, the dissertations on whaling cease and the decks are cleared for action. A few singular things occur, such as Queequeg's premonition of death which resulsts in the building of a coffin. Ahab's artificial leg cracks and he has to have a new one made. Finally, the *Pequod* meets the *Rachel*, the "Season on the Line" is begun, and the hunt for *Moby Dick* becomes deadly earnest.

The first day of the battle with Moby Dick is simply a matter of feinting and sizing up between the opponents. But on the second day the whale joins battle, breaking Ahab's new ivory leg and dragging off the Parsee Fedallah, Ahab's sorcerous advisor. At this point Ahab reveals to Starbuck a series of prophecies Fedallah had made which seem to indicate success for the mission.

The third and decisive day begins with a warning omen shouted by the cabin boy, Pip, for Ahab to beware of sharks. During the course of the chase and battle the omens of the Parsee are all fulfilled in some rather surprising ways and in fulfilment are seen to point towards death, not success. The battle ends with Ahab garrotted by a harpoon line. Then Moby Dick, as if to clear the field of all his enemies, rams and sinks the ship The olny survivor is Ishmael, who, like Job's messnger, has eacaped to tell the tale. And he, clinging to the coffing lifebuoy, is finally picked up by the *Rachel* as another orphan of the sea.

As Ishmeal is all rumination, so Ahab is all will. Ahab seeks to dominate nature, to impose and to inflict his wiil

on the outside world—whether it be the crew that must jump to his orders or the great white whale that is essentially indifferent to him. Though Ahab may be a mad sea captain, a tyrant of the quarter deck who disturbs crew's sleep as he stumps along on his ivory leg, yet he is a quester, a searcher of truth as well as of falsehood. His voyage is a search for reality. He is Everyman. He tries to reassert man's place in nature. His cry is : "who's to doom, when the judge himself is dragged to the bar?" Behind his cry is the fear that man's covenant with God has been broken—that there is no purpose to our existence. His quest is man's struggle to support himself physically in nature. His is a passionate mind speaking, for its metaphysical concerns, out of the very midst of phsiycal life. He is the sign and symbol of a man without hope, hopelessly holding up hope in the midst of despair. In that watery and the deep, Ahab's thought has an echo in the universe. He like the writer of the book is ittent upon the essence of things, the mystery that lieth beyond, that which is beneath the seeming. The physical search for the whale is the quest for ultimate realtiy; as Ahab destroys his ship, his crew and other voyagers, and nothing except Ishmael is saved, so shall destroy every man everything except the soul in the eternal journey. The dody will be destroyed ; the man shall not be able to catch hold of the wahle; he would not be able to catch hold of either the Evil or the Good (God). Man has no hope for redemption; he is completely doomed because of orignal sin. Evils of the world cannot be eradicated by a man who is determined enough and will travel far enough to find and desttroy them.

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Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

Q. 62 Account for the great popularity that Emily Dickinson enjoys today.

Or

Bring out the main features and aspects of Emily Dickinson's poetry.

Or

Discuss Emily Dickinson as a poetess.

Answer.

Her Popularity

Emily Dickinson is a great American poet of the nineteenth cantury. She was "the most perfect flower of New England Transcendentalism", an anticipator of metaphysical poetry, a smeller of modernity, and an upholder of romanticism. In her wit she was metaphysical, in her attitudes a Romantic and in her poetics, a modern. A. C. Ward has called her "Perhaps next to Whitman the greatest American poet of the last century."

Variety of Her Subjects

Although isolated from active life of hurly and burly, secluded from the practical experiences of life, living in her ivory tower, she wrote on a great variety of subjects. She wrote on life, death, on contemporary social scene, on mortality and immortality. on pain and pleasure, on hope and fear, on love, Nature, God, religion, and virtue. Like Blake she could see eternity in the grain of palm, in the blade of grass, in the chirp of birds and the sound of the stream. Hers was a richly romantic soul that found strange beauty and startling suggestion in the simplest elements of experience—the glance of a freind, a sentence in a book, a bee's hum, a stone in the road, or the slant of light on winter afternoons.

Her Originality

The first thing that strikes us on reading the poems of Miss Dickinson is their great originality. She belonged to no school of poets and hardly cared to imitate anyone's style. Higginson of *The Atlantic Monthly* to whom she sent her poems asking if they were "alive", thought that she was influenced by Withman's style, and that her poems were "too delicate." But, this is not quite true. Whatever there may be in Emily Dickison's poetry that bears resemblance to that of Whitman it is not certainly the result of imitation. In fact we have the assertion of Emily Dickinson that she never read Whitman and she had been told that "he was disgraceful." There is greater truth in the suggestion that

her poems smack of Emerson's poetry. A comparative study of Emerson's and Emily Dickinson's verse makes this clear. Accounting for this one of Emily Dickinson's critics writes : "What she actually represents is the last surprising bloom of New England's flowering time.........She was a child of the Golden Day and never lost the impress of the period. Three of its strongest currents came into a confluence in which she was nurtured; the Yankee, or more broadly, American humour that was just coming out of the ground. and the spriritual unrest typified by Emerson which everywhere was melting the frost of custstom...Each was implicit in her surroundings and was absorted from the atmosphere of her time. Blended, they gave her a style that was both original and native."

Her Poetic Creed

In the from of scraps, letters and her scatterd observations, she framed a poetic creed which is not systematic According to her, her poetry is an expression of her private griefs. In a letter she wrote: "If I read a book and it makes my whole body so cold no fire can warm me, I know that is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry." Great poetry is identified by its soothing effects. She describes the poet in the following manner :—

This was a poet—it is that
distills amazing sense
From ordinary meanings,
And alters so immense
From the familiar species
That perished by the door,
we wonder it was no ourselves
Arrested it before.

She measures every grief she meets with analytic eyes, and she finds "a phrase to every thought that she ever had." To her a poet is an embodiment of wisdom and representative of eternity. She writes :

I reckon when I count at all—
First—Poets—Then the sun—
Then Summer—the list I done—
But looking back—the first so seems
To comprehend the Whole—
The Others look a needless show—
So I write—Poets All.

In her poetry opposites co-exist in harmony. Her miniature poems absorb the cosmic and comic, the physical and psychic experiences.

Her Lyricism

Emily was a romantic at heart. She was a great lyrical poet like the great romantic poets. In her poetry too we find the major

qualities of the great romantic lyrical poets. We have the same love for nature, same personal and emotional note, same pessimism and melancholy, same musical craving to express the grief hidden, and the same richness of imagination as found in the great romantic poets of the nineteenth century. She also has the usual spontaneity. Her themes are also romantic by and large. In her techniques and in her revolt against the Calvinistic tradition of her times she is very much unromantic. Her mysticism and love of beauty is also akin to romanticism.

In short, hers is a lyric genius, not dramatic nor narrative. She wrote about 100 yrics. She has the precision and economy of expression needed for a lyric She brought freshness, vivacity, wit and restraint into the lyric form. Her poems are rightly called "bolts of melody," tinkling piano tunes. Hers are the poems of 'self.'

Her recurrent themes are life, death, soul and love. About one third of her total poetic output relates to death. She is the poet of the limitless reaches of the inward mood and consciousness. She explores the human soul and grasps the essence of human experience. She is the master of epigram too. She makes capital out of capitalization of letters and use of dashes and punctuation. One of her most notable abilities is her skill in giving concrete expression to abstract ideas. For example the poem 'Chariot'.

Metaphysical Element in Her Poetry

Emily Dickinson anticipated Donne, Cowley and metaphysical poets' revival. Like the poetry of the metaphysical school of poetry, her poetry also is a union of thought and emotion and is full of startling images. It possesses Donne's wit and epigrammatic quality. It has the metaphysical brevity and compactness Like theirs hers is also a poetry of intelligence. wit and controlled emotion rather than as an index to the homilies of religious and political thought. In her metres and broken rhythms too she resembles the metaphysical poets. She is also the mistress of the metaphysical paradox and poignancy.

Modernity in Her Poetry

Emily Dickinson was a modern poet, and she anticipated Hopkins and Pound. Her conceits and jottings, her technical innovations and brevity show her modernity. As the editors of *The American Tradition in Literature* observe, "Readers of the Twentieth Century would understand her better, for it was their idiom that she spoke " In the words of Norman Forester, "Emily Dickinson seems to have experienced, far in advance, something like the spirit of revolt, the skeoticism, the freedom of expression that flourished after the First World War." Like the moderns she discovered the sharp, intense image is the poet's best instrument. She also anticipated the modern enlargement of melody - by

assonance, dissonance, and "off rhyme", the utility of the elipsis of thought and the verbal ambiguity. In her images and symbols also she is like the modern poets. The lines such as "I Felt a Funeral, in my Brain", the image of box and boot, sink city, the decayed house coughing goat, sneezing woman and peevish gutters are modern and symbolize spiritual decay and impotence of the present age.

Autobiographical Element in Emily's Poetry

Emily Dickinson's poetry is a confessional document of the eccentricities of the poet's mind. It is a record of her reactions to some unnamed events in life. She lacks the pure objectivity of the modern poets, especially that of Eliot who says that poetry is not an expression of personality but an escape from personality. The picture of Emily Dickinson that emerges from her poems is that of a saintly recluse who defied the conventions of society and who rebelled against the tenets of formal religion. Her ego.istical defiance of society and her nearly blasphemous attitude to religion are not the results of immature adolescence. Many of her poems reveal her frustration and her death poems reflect many of the death-scenes she witnessed.

Image and Symbol in Emily Dickinson's Poetry

"Tell all the truth
But tell it slant."

So wrote Emily. According to her poetics, direct statement of ideas or direct communication of emotions is not useful. "Her poetry is fundamentally oblique where an idea is communicated, or an emotion recreated not by direct verbal statement but through evocation of approrpriate images. Thus, in effect, the image becomes the medium of the poet's communicating process." The image, therefore, has an important role to play in her poems.

Most of her images are drawn from flowers, bees, spiders, wars, voyages of exploration, lightening and volcanoes. There are geometrical and surrealistic images too.

Just mark a few of images :

1. *......a Maid*
   Always a Flower would be.

2. *Essential oils—are wrung—*
   The Attar from the Rose
   Be not expressed by Suns—alone—
   It is the gift of screws.

3. *Because the Bee may blameless hum*
   For Thee a Bee do I become
   List even unto Me.

4. *A sepal, petal, and a thorn......*
   And I'm a Rose.

5. *The reticent volcano keeps*
   His never slumbering plan

As mentioned by Alber J. Gelpi, the ro e symbolizes natural phenomena ; the sun, the transcendent fertilizing power ; and the attar, the artistic distillation. The spider is the symbol of the artist, who spins around him a world of imagination. The poetess calls the spider "the neglected son of genius." The images of the sea, voyages and exploration symbolize the poet's yearning to explore the mysterious continents of her inner self.

Her imagery is complex and functional. In extreme flights of imagination she uses images which seem surrealistic in their content. For instance, in the poem "I'll tell you how the sun rose," the poetess speaks of the sunrise in terms of 'a ribbon at a time.' So is the image of 'the hills untieing their bonnets'. Her most frequent metaphor for ecstasy is circumsference.

Her Technical Peculiarities

Strange use of capital letters, frequent use of dashes, use of synonyms, repetition of metres, use of irregular metres and rhythms, slanting manner of expression, bravity and conciseness of expression, use of colloquial expressions, grammatical irregularities, are some of her well-known technical popularities.

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Q. 63. Discuss the Language, Technique and Style of Emily Dickinson's poetry.

Ans. Emily experimented with language and style of poetry. Some critics condemn and reject her stylistic modes. They characterize them as unpardonable, barbarous lapses of diction and rhythm. They call her punctuation erratic and her grammar. incorrigible. They attribute all these lapses to her intellectual arrogance or lack of maturity of style and content, But such an approach is not fair, for Emily was a frank experimentalist. She innovated syntax. She is fond of short monosyllabic words. Economy of expression and suggestiveness are the halimarks of her style. Most of her poems are microscopic structures that can accommodate into them the whole range of macroscopic experience in the life of the poet. Her common metre is eight-syllabic iambic followed by one of eighty syllables. She uses odd rhymes. Her style is uniquely her own. It has vividness, freshness and originality. She can minimize big things. God becomes 'Papa above', 'a noted clergyman' ; death 'a supple suitor' or a gentleman who gives a courteous ride to a lady. Just mark the mastery of her paradoxes : "We lose because we win." "a wounded Beer—leaps highest," "Tell all the Truth but tell it slant" or

Success—is counted sweetest
By those who ne'er succeed......

she can convey more meaning through her metaphors, symbols and images.

The technical imperfections of Emily Dickinson's verse have also contributed to her present-day popularity. She makes use of imperfect rhyme. she takes liberties with grammar and rhyme and makes a habit of packing her lines with cryptic meanings. What she has said about the letter in her poem "Going to Him ! Happy Letter" may be said about her poetry.

I only said the syntax
And left the verb and the pronoun out. .

This of course, left slow readers perplexedly fumbling for an omitted connection. Fastidious critics are annoyed by her carelessness of rhyme and lapses of grammar, but her readers find it a delightful experience to grope for the meaning of the poet. Nine tenths of her supposed lapses of grammar are to be accounted for by a stenographic terseness of expression which eliminates customary connectives and suffixes as in her poem "A Secret".

A secret told
Ceases to be a secret then
A secret kept—
That can appeal but one.

Better of it
Continual be afraid
Than it and whom
You told it to, beside.

Emily Dickinson habitually resorts to the subjunctive use of the verb, which is no longer common in the English speech. Thus in her self revealing poem we get this :

Publication is the auction
Of the mind of man.
Poverty be justifying
For so foul a thing.

Even about the theme, Emily Dickinson can at times be delightfully vague. One of her poems runs thus :

It dropped so low in my regard
I heard it hit the ground,
And go to pieces on the stones
At bottom of my mind

Let blamed the fate that fractured, less
Than I reviled myself
For entertaining plated wares
Upon my silver shelf.

We do not know what the "it" means. But this vagueness, instead of spoiling the poem, actually enhances its beauty. The sense is clear, the moral is conveyed Along with these enigmatic usages and expressions, we get in Emily Dickinson's poetry a quaint love of paradoxes. For instance, she writes :

> *A death-blow is a life-blow to some*
> *Who, till they died, did not alive become,*
> *Who, had they lived had died, but when*
> *They died, vitality begun.*

In spite of all these defects of defects they are the final impression of her work is of astonishing integrity and originality. Summing up the qualities of her work **Marcus Cunliffe** writes : "Despite her interest in death, she exhibits a quick sensibility to the world around her, and to the materials of her craft. Technically a poor poet, she does most effective violence to vocabulary. Terms from many sources—law, geometry, engineering—are used to suit her purposes. Commonplace words come alive in new contexts and she never hesitates to substitute parts of speech :

> *Kingdoms like the orchard*
> *Flit russetly away.*

Sometimes her economy is that of New England idiom : "And 'twas like midnight some"—The laconic 'some' could only have been used by an American poet.

One critic comparing her with Whitman has said that both write as though no one had written poetry before. The remark is both a fair criticism, and a great and merited compliment. In her finest lines, she has all the magic of a major poet. The words

> *Farther in summer that the birds,*
> *Pathetic from the grass,*

to take one example from hundreds, wonderfully defy analysis. The magic of her verse eludes definition. The charm, slender and delicate as gossamer, that makes her poems so appealing is as elusive as the elusive thought that the poetess describes in one of her poems :

> *Nor where it went, not why it came*
> *Nor definitely what it was*
> *Have I the art to say.*

Q. 64. Discuss the recurring themes in Emily Dickinson's poetry.

Ans. Emily Dickinson, though a refugee from practical life and its experiences, understood very well life and its problems. She wrote on myriad human subjects like life and death. God and

Nature, time and eternity, human emotions like love, hope and fear, the trivial and the sublime, the cosmic and the comic, the finite and the infinite. "She was a child of the Golden Day and never lost the impress of the period. Three of it strongest currents came into a confluence in which she was nurtured ; the Yankee, or more broadly, American humour that was just coming out of the ground ; and the spiritual unrest typified by Emerson which every where was melting the frost of custom... ..."

The Theme of Life

Emily writes of mankind's fears and hopes, its moments of frustration and its ecstasies of Joy. Here are her opinions on success :

S ccess is counted sweetest
By those who never succeed.
To comprehend a nectar
Requires sorest need.

And on defeat and victory :

Life is but life, and death but death!
Bliss is but bliss and breath but breath !
And, if indeed, I fail,
At least to know the worst is sweet.
Defeat means nothing but defeat
No drearier can happen.

For her life is a blend of tears and smiles ; every smile is mingled with a pearl of tear :—

For each ecstatic instant
We must an anguish pay
In keen and quivering ratio
To the ecstasy.

And

Delight becomes pictorial
When viewed through pain......

Hope is like a sweet little bird perching on the soul of every man. It keeps on pouring its melody of hope in every life and even life of chill suffering is made warm by the sweet music of hope :

Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches on the soul,
And sings the tone without words,
And never stops at all.

The spirit of man strengthened by hope is superior to Fate. Man should never lose his faith in himself

To lose one's faith surpasses
To loss of an estate,

Because estates can be,
Replensnied,—faith cannot.

And the inner life of man is more valuable than any other thing:

The brain is wider than the sky,
For, put them side bv side,
The one the other will include
With ease, and you beside.
The brain is deeper than the sea
The brain is just the weight of God ..

Emily Dickinson's views on life are philosophic and healthy.

The spirit of Emily Dickinson's poems has been compared with that of the great metaphysicals, John Donne and William Blake; she is indeed like them in her ability to expand the little particularities of her everyday existence into ideas that are tim less and universal. For Emily these particularitics of life were birds, flies, frogs, sunrises and sunsets, cups, saucers, doors, even a snake, that "narrow Fellow n the Grass" Broadening these simple subjects, the poet expresses her feelings about God, death, and immortality.

The Theme of Nature

"A great deal of Emily Dickinson's poetry bristles with nature-themes. There are frequent reference, direct and indirect, to various phenomena of Nature Emily Dickinson wrote on flowers bees, on birds and spiders, on caterpillars and butterflies, on lightening and volcanoes, on mountains and daisies, and hundred other things found in nature."

Defining her view of Nature she wrote in one poem:

Nature is what we see—
The Hill—the Afternoon—
Squirrel—Eclipse—the Bumble bee—
Nay—Nature is Heaven—
Nature is what we hear—
The Bobolink—the sea—
Thunder the Cricket—
Nay—Nature is Harmony—

The Theme of Love

A very large number of Emily's poems deal with the theme of love. These love-poems which are among the best poems ever written on the subject sound the whole gamut of love. Poems evincing a romantic attitude to love, poems that frankly depict a turbulent passion, poems that ring with the anguish of separation from the loved one, and poems exalting the theme of renunciation of love and the spiritual victory thus won, have all come from the pen of this srrangely powerful poet. Her own burning searing

experience of love may be discerned from the frankly passionate and highly anguished poems she wrote. She always reckoned love as a very great thing and in more poems than one she comments upon the importance of love. One of her well known poems is a triumphant rhapsody of love

Love can do all but raise the dead;
I doubt if even that
From such a giant were withheld
Were flesh equivalent.

Another poem celebrating love is also worth quoting:

Love is that later thing than death,
More previous than life,
Conforms, it at its entrance and
Usurps it of itself,

Emily wrote about 100 poems of love during 1861-63. Critics have variously related them to her different lovers—Benjamin Newton, Henry Vaughan Emmons and Charles Wadsworth. Knowledge about such affairs is unconfirmed. There are scholars who say that her love poems are based only on theoretical propositions. They have nothing or very little to do with her practical love affairs. Both views are prevalent in literary circles. Love to Emily was like a boundless ocean which puts minor streams to rest. Love taught her immense patience and fortitude. The toil of love led her to explore the undiscovered continent of divine love and she associated sometimes this particular element with Death and Immortality.

Her love poems indeed deal with many facets of love, from rapture to despair, from the physical to metaphysical, from earth to heaven. Sometimes she gives an imaginative treatment of love Love divested of all its earthly voluptuousness becomes a mystic life-force. As her lovers have always Eternity in view where they might thrive "unmolested" by the pangs of death, their love never comes to fruition in this world. In the poem, "I cannot live without you", the beloved says that she would rather endure the agony of Hell where she would be ultimately consigned to after the Judgement day than suffer the pangs of separation from her lover. She knows that she cannot live a "life" with him now - she is denied that pleasure. But she can meet him after death and then be with him until Judgement-day The pleasure of association she would thus derive will invest her with power enough to endure the pains of Hell.

This theme af reunion after death recurs in a series of poems like " 'Twas a long Parting—but the time", "You taught me Waiting with Myself," "Fitter to see Him, I may be." etc. In the poem "There came a day at Summer's full", the lovers plan a

marriage in the afterworld. Love is spoken of as being immortal in the following lines :

I live with Him—I hear his voice—
I stand alive—today—
To witness to the Certainty
Of Immortality—

The Theme of Mortality and Immortality

A good deal of Emily Dickinson's poetry is filled with themes of mortality and immortality. It has been estimated that nearly a third of the bulk of her poetry concerns the theme of death. She once wrote to Higginson : "death gave me awe for friends, striking sharp and early, for I held them since in a brittle love, of more alarum than peace." Death was a central problem of her life She faced it almost every day. She lived at a place which fell in the way to a cemetry, and funeral processions passed by her residence frequently. She saw death all around herself, in her family friends, love, life and convictions. She was moved by the deaths of babies and women. She accepts death as a physical fact, as a material truth, and though this acceptance leads to philosophical or theological ruminations, her immediate interest in the poems is to dramatize the event to bring out the tension, conflict or inner drama that such a catastropnic event will have on the minds of an audience. Her obsession with death is due to her Puritan surroundings.

Her death-poems are divided into four groups by Thomas Welborn Ford : (i) poems dealing with death and immortality ; (ii) poems dealing with the physical aspects of death ; (iii) poems which personify death; and (iv) poems with an elegiac note. Her poem "Because I Could Not Stop for Death" is a characteristic poem in which the idea that calm acceptance of death is a way of conquering death. Just as the diver is rewarded with the pearl after taking a plunge into the depth of the ocean and just as the seraph has been raised to the first rank, similarly immortality is the reward for human beings who face death calmly and boldly.

Her poems on immortality record the progress of the poets' journey from doubts and questionings to an ultimate faith, immortality. Just see the following lines !

1. *Death is a dialogue between*
   The spirit and the dust......

2. *The life we have is very great*
   The life that we shall see
   Surpass it, we know, because
   It is infinity
   But when all space has been beheld
   And all Dominion shown
   The smallest human heart's extent
   Reduces it to none.

3. *Behind Me—dips Eternity—*
Before Me—Immortality—
Myself—the Term between—
Death but the Drift of Eastern Gray
Dis olving into Dawn away
Before the vast begin.

The Theme of God and Religion

In spite of her preoccupation with the themes of death immortality, Emily shows an obsession with Time. She views time as experienced in this life as a ' brief term" linking the two miracles—the miracle of Eternity and the miracle of Immortality. "Using the Bible as her chief source of inspiration and the rhythms of the hymn books as a metrical starting point," Emily Dickinson wrote a number of poems of religious themes or God. Her relationship with God is an interesting one, for even in her childhood she could not force herself to be orthodox. As a school girl she had great difficulty in professing herself to be a Christian. The harsh God of the Old Testament—the God who created man in His own image, restricted him with all sorts of "thou shall-nots", and then destroyed the image with death —had little appeal of Emily. In her poems her God is a very personal one, to be treated like a friend, praised for his good deeds and chided for his faults. Pompous piety has no place in any of her religious poems and when her feelings of intimacy lead her to address the Deity as "Papa above" we are charmed rather rhan shocked by poetry that lets us become a part of a delightful woman to whom the trivialities of existence and the untouchable varieties are of equal importance.

Emily sometimes gives a humorous treatment to God. She treats God as an intimate kinsmen and calls Him. "Jupiter my father" and burgler and banker." She sometimes calls him her "old neighbour" and sometimes as "Papa above." Her attitude to God and religion is basically ambivalent. She believes in God, yet she does not believe She has intense faith in immortality, but her doubts about immortality are equally intense. She waves between Paganism and Puritanism.

Miscellaneous Themes

A small section of her poetry reflects the social scene and contemporary incidents from balloon ascensions to circuses and railroads. When the first train arrived in Amherst, she recorded the event in a poem, which is interesting despite its conceits. A group of poems satirizes the sterile minds and small petty outlook of the Amherst ladies. The soft conventional lives of the ladies are ridiculed by the poet thus:

What soft-cherubic creatures—
These Gentlewomen are—
One would as soon assault a Plush—

Or violate a star—
Such Dimity convictions—
A Horror so refined
Of freckled Human Nature—
Of Duty—ashamed—
It's such a common—Glory—
A Fisherman's—Degree

Though poems on social themes and with satirical intent appear among the collected pieces of Emily Dickinson, yet these are not her best poems. For the best poetic output of this strange genius, we have to turn to those poems which repeatedly make use of themes that lay closest to her heart—themes like Nature, Love, Death and Immortality. It is in these poems that her genius is a glow and it is these poems that from the seclusion of her life she bequeathed to the world as her best offering.

———

Q. 65. Discuss Emily Dickinson as a poet of death.

Or

Analyse critically the theme of death in the poetry of Emily Dickinson.

Ans. It has been estimated that nearly a third of the bulk of her poetry concerns the theme of death, which has attracted largest critical attention. Throughout her life she was preoccupied with death. She referred to death not only in her poems but also in her letters to her friends. sometimes her attitude towards death is that of awe and fear ; at other times she seems to be in love with death and regards it as a gateway to eternal and permanent rest. She saw death all around herself. in her family, friends, love, life and covictions On one occasion she explained why her ideas were rather dark. "I have just seen a funeral procession go by of a negro baby, and if my ideas are rather dark you need not marvel." She accepts death as a physical fact, as a material truth. Her preoccupation with death may largely be owing to her Puritan surroundings In the Puritan doctrine of existence death theme occupied a solemn place For the Puritan, death is the climax of living, and it must be taken in a solemn way.

Thomas Wellborn Ford has grouped her death poems into four categories :-

(i) Poems dealing with death and immortality;
(ii) Poems dealing with the physical aspects of death;
(iii) Poems which personify death; and
(iv) Poems with an elegiac note.

In "Adrift ! A little boat adrift" the poetess compares death with night and her life with a boat. In "I haven't told my garden yet—" there is the tone of mockery, and death is talked of as something that not does deserve one's attention:

I will not name it in the street
For shops wou'd stare at me—
That one so shy—so ignorant
Should have the face to die.

There are poems which simply dramatize death, observing the dying or the dead from specific angles, studying character psychology before or after the climatic point, that is, death. Some of the poems are reflections on cemeteries, funeral processions or acts of burial. "Bless God," death is spoken of as a person with a 'musket on his breast, and who would charge the brave t of all the martial blest. Poems like "Just lost, when I was saved " " How many times these low feet staggered", present death as moving to a pre-chosen destination to take possession of the objects it has decided on, in a cool, calculated manner. In "A visitor in Marl", death is spoken of as something inevitable :-

A Visitor in Marl—
Who influences Flowers—
Till they are orderly as Busts—
And Elegant—as Glass—

Who visits in the Night—
AND JUST BEFORE THE SUN—
Concludes his glistening interview
Caresses—and is gone—

Poems like "I went to thank Her," "It feels a shame to be Alive," "I think I was enchanted," "Her sweet turn to leave the Homestead," etc. are elegiac in tone, and recapture in words the moods of the speakers as they confront death. The gap between life and death is unbridgeable, but this realization comes only when one is betaken by death :

Our journey had advanced
Our feet were almost come
To that odd Fork in Being's Road—
Eternity -by Term—
Our pace took sudden awe—
Our feet reluctant—led—
Before—were—Cities— but Between—
The Forest of the Dead—
Retreat—was out of Hope—

At last she walked between belief and disbelief, yet was always obsessed by death :

of Paradise' existence
All we know
Is the uncertain certainty.

"Because I could Not Stop for Death" is one of her best poems on death. It is also remarkable for its imagery. In this

poem, the poetess suggests that the best way to overcome death is to conquer it :—

Because I could not stop for Death,
He kindly stopped for me,
The carriage held but just ourselves
And Immortality.

We slowly drove. he knew no haste,
And I had put away.
My labor, and my leisure too,
For his civility.

We passed the school where children played
At wrestling in a ring ;
We passed the fields of gazing grain,
We passed the setting sun.

We passed before a house that seemed
A swelling of the ground
The roof was scarcely visible,
The cornice but a mound.

Since then 'tis centuries, but each
Feels shorter than the day
I first surmised the horse's heads
Were toward eternity.

The idea that death is a gateway to immortality has been expressed frequently by Emily and in one of her poems she likens death to a pilot which takes the human soul to the shores of Eternity.

On this wondrous sea,
Sailing silently,
Knowest thou the shore
Ho ! pilot ho !
Where no breakers roar
Where is the storm is o'er ?
In the silent west
Many sails at rest,
Their anchors fast,
There I pilot thee,—
Land, ho ! Eternity !
Ashore at last.

Just as the diver is rewarded with the pearl after taking plunge into the depth of the ocean and just as the seraph has been raised to the first rank, similarly immortality is the reward for human beings who face death calmly and boldly. Our attention should be focussed on immortality rather than on death.

Pearls are the Diver's farthing
Extorted from the Sea —
Pinions— the Seraph's wagon

Pedestr an once – as we –
Night is the morning's Canvas
Larceny – legacy –
Death, but our rapt attention
To Immmortality.

My figures fail to tell me
How far the Vi lage lies –
Whose peasants are ·ngels –
Whose Canton dot the skies –

My classics vail their faces –
My faith that Dark adores –
Which from its solemn abbeys
Such resurrection pours.

———·-

Q. 66. Trace the Puritan influence on Emily Dickinson's poetry.

Or

Discuss Emily as a Poet of New England or Amherst.

Ans Emily Dickinson is part of a stark tradition—one that includes philosophers and poets from Edward Taylor to Robert Frost. In her work one can discern sever: l things that were peculiar to the puritan mind. She was in many respects a child of puritan New England, though, the great fact remains that she rose above her time and her immediate environment by her sheer genius.

The influence of New England on the poet was strongly felt, and her poetry reflects whatever was good or bad about Amherst. This fact has struck her critics and one of them George Whicher in his book. *This Was a Poet* writes : "To an extraordinary degree she absorbed into herself the atmosphere of the countryside where she was born.........She made it her business to embody in her poems the quintessence of New England ways of thinking and feeling In her, the region became articulate."

Born in Amherst she lived and died in the house in which she was born and except for a few short trips never left it. It is not surprising therefore that New England should have shaped her thoughts and habits. Even in her poetic technique her terse poetic shorthand, we find New England traits of frugality. And as for the rhythms of her poetry, they are based on the New England hymn-tunes.

The atmosphere in the town of Amherst into which Emily Dickinson was born was one of brooding Calvinistic religious consciousness. The thought of Doomsday and God's vengeance obsessed the people. Religious fervour was the most popular sentiment. Though Emily D ckison's was a quietly rebellious

personality, she shared the great religious awareness of her community as is evident from her poetry Her themes include immortality, Resurrection and Eternity, and religious experience. Her constant exploration of religious experience to the dead the result of the Calvinistic tendencies. Nineteenth century Amherst was a cradle of Calvinistic beliefs rigidly enforced. Among the prominent and cherished ideals were the 'doctrine of justification' or Divine Grace coming to a per on and that of sanctification that is, a man proving himself worthy of grace by living the acceptable Christian life. These iceas were real and important to the people Church membership was a test of the good life. But Emily Dickinson rebelled against all these. She stopped attending church by 18·0 and she observed that all her family were religious but herself. She once wrote that she "has no particular objection to becoming a Christian," adding in mock-seriousness "I am one of the bad ones" She rejected many of the Calvinistic doctrines like man's innate depravity and predestination. She went a step further and satirised many of these orthodox beliefs. In poems such as "Abraham to kill him" and "of God we ask one favour", we find her poking fun at the idea of original sin. She does not spare God either, whom Calvinistic dogmas pictured as an unforgiving tyrant. quick to punish but reluctant to forgive, and indifferent o human suffering. The paradox of original sin and man's incurring the wrath of God because of this, is ironically commented upon by Emily Dickinson in a poem called "Heavenly Father-take to thee." Here she accuses God of duplicity for putting the unavoidable original sin into man and then taking him to task for the very same sin.

Though Emily Dickinson took such privileges with the name of God, she had great reverence for God, and a firm, unwavering trust in His existence. The question of immortality hovered forever in her consciousness and many are the poems where she has affirmed her faith in the immortality of the soul. Even when she turned away in distaste from the religious professions and avowals of her contemporaries, she was intensely concerned with the salvation o her soul and deeply aware of spiritual reality. It was not that Emily Dickinson was not truly religious : it was that her attitude was strikingly unorthodox. Sanctimonious platitudes were not for her. Unlike most other Americans, Emily Dickinson was religiously oriented Her poems repeatedly make use of the themes of the nature of the soul, problems of immortality, the possibility of faith and the reality of God. Her poems typified the moral earnestness of the old Puritans. She was also a mystic in the sense that she was forever trying to experience and perceive the Divine force, which she, in her typically enigmatic way described as "Circumference."

Emily Dickinson's inordinate preoccupation with Death and pain and suffering is also a Puritan streak. Pain and anguish

fascinated the poet. Time and time again she dwelt on the question of anguish. One of her startling poems on pain begins

I like a look of agony,
Because I know it's true.

The effect of suffering on the soul is depicted by her beautiful poem 'After Great Pain a formal feeling comes."

After great pain a formal feeling comes—
The nerves sit ceremonious like tombs :
X X X
This is the hour of lead
Remebered if outlived.
As freezing persons recollect the snew—
First chill, then stupor, then letting go.

Among the eighteen hurdred poems that Emily Dickinson composed more than five hundred deal with the theme of death. She views death from all possible angles, depicting all its varied aspects. Death is treated lightly in one of her poems—'Death of a child.'

She lav as if ct play
Her life had leaped away—
Intending to return-—
But not so soon –
Her merry Arms, half dropt—
As if for lull of sport –
An instant had forgot—
The trick to start—
... ...
Her Morning at the door—
Devising. I am sure—
To force her sleep—
So light—so deep –

'Because I could not stop for Death' is easily the best poem that Emily Dickinson wrote on the subject of death. Immortality also creeps in to the poem and is pictured as the third person in the carriage, mentioned in the first stanza.

Because I could not stop for Death—
He kindly stopped for me—
The Carrige held but just Ourselves—
And Immortality.

To Emily Dickinson, Death appeared in varied guises. At times she treats death as a courtly lover, at times as the dreadful assassin. Sometimes death is the physical corrupter, and sometimes the only free agent in nature. Poems like 'Because I could not stop for D ath' and 'A clock stopped' deal with the inexorable power of death. These poems underline also the physical trans-

formation and the final isolation that death involves. Sometimes Emily Dickinson has emphasized the grim aspects of death by her deliberate use of the funeral and religious imagery. Death and immortality were thought of together by the poetess who even interchanged these terms. She rather thought of death as the threshold of the new state of immortality. Thus the introspective Puritan conscience that Emily Dickinson inherited, may be found in her intense preoccupation with pain, death and immortality. With her incessant searching within the recesses of the spirit, she reminds us of Thoreau. Her soul's infinite capacity for awareness is found in everything that she wrote.

That Emily Dickinson was product of Puritan New England atmosphere is agreed upon by all her critics. Allen Tate in his article "New England Culture and Emily Dickinson" argues with great eloquence that she was born into a perfect literary situation. His idea is that the role that fell on Emily Dickinson was to look at the old invalidated traditions of the community and to examine critically these traditions in the light of her own experience and to 'discover anew their enduring values'. Allen Tate says that Emily Dickinson's task was one of defining culture, that is rediscovering the source of ideas and standards which had become obscured by dogma and practicality. One thing is certain and it is that the best poems that Emily Dickinson wrote are those which reveal "the clash of her perceptive, inquiring mind with the rigidly orthodox community."

Q. 67. Discuss Emily Dickinson as a love poet.

Ans. The strange young woman who shut herself away from the world in the most mysterious manner possible has been the subject of a great deal of conjecture. It has been agreed among critics that a disappointment in love, a searing and devastating emotional experience has been the reason behind Emily Dickinson's withdrawal from the world. Many names such as Benjamin Newton, Henry Vaughan, Emmons and Charles Wadworth have been suggested by critics and biographers as possible lovers of Emily Dickinson. However the identity of the person who caused indescribable anguish to the sensitive poet cannot be established beyond the shadow of a doubt, for she has very carefully covered up her personal life. There is no doubt at all about the fact that there was an emotional crisis in her life the white heat of which was to forge her untempered spirit. From her letters and her poems it may safely be gathered that some climatic emotional experience occurred, during 1860-1862.

Emily Dickinson's brother Austen once remarked that his sister was often in love and responded emotionally to many men. Many of her early love lyrics are sentimental and are general

expressions of a young girl's awareness of the male. But gradually we find the tone changing. Clearly the love poems at this stage mirror an ardent love, full of desire and erotic anticipation couched in allegorical language. Poignantly the poems go on to reveal the anguish of parting and then they become the record of her severe schooling of her emotions and renunciation of a physical love, only to have it transformed into something spiritual. From the early sentimental love-lyrics to the religio-mystical love-utterances we find a wide range in Emily Dickinson's love poetry. They afford very frank pictures of her own passionate longings and also psychological studies of repression and emotional desire. One who is acquainted with the entire range of her love poems can only marvel at the fact that even after reading some of them Higginson, her literary Guide and mentor, declared that no American writer had ever written great love poetry and that "the American poet of passion is yet to come". The truth of the matter however is that few American poets before Emily Dickinson or after her have given such a probing analysis of love in its varied aspects or described with such unforgettable effectiveness, the effects of love and passion.

The love poems of Emily Dickinson can be examined in different groups or stages. The first grouping consists of her most sentimental and early love lyrics. But when her ardent soul throbbed to the magnetism of one man, the poems got filled with images of ship-wreck, drowning and suicide thus proving the devastating effect the passion has on her. One of the poems belonging to this period is "I started Early—Took My Dog", which tries to analyse the complex and powerful emotional influence exerted by the male upon the passive female. The theme of powerful physical attraction is treated here along with the idea of running away from this frightening and fascinating experience. Within the allegorical frame work we have these two themes. The poem apparently deals with the visit of a young girl to the sea-shore.

I started Early—Took my Dog—
And visited the Sea—
The Mermaids in the Basement
Came out to look at me—

The word 'Early' holds the key to the interpretation of this poem. It means that the young girl is on a journey unattempted before. Gradually the tone changes from one of childlike innocence to a deep awareness. The young girl is fascinated by the Sea's advances expressed in a number of mild sexual images. The newly awakened emotions of the girl and her fear at the thought of the Sea's complete possession of her are expressed in verse that is suggestive of shock.

And He—He followed—close behind—
I felt his Silver Heel
Upon my Ankle—Then my Shoes
Would overflow with Pearl—

Until We met the Solid Town—
No One He seemed to know—
And bowing—with a Mighty look—
At me—the Sea withdrew.

Examining all the associations clustered about the Sea, his beauty, freedom, haughtiness, male power, and the shy fearful repressed qualities of the female and the land we can assume that the poem is meant to express the emotional and physical effects of a lover's advances. She nearly succumbs but her life of control and suppressions proves stronger than this temptation and she returns to the solid town. "The basic theme is the rejection of one of life's prime forces- love, sex, beauty or death for a weak conventional existence." (John B. Pickard)

Another poem that is even more powerful as a Pre-Freudian "In Winter in My Room." The poem begins on a note of child-like simplicity describing a worm that is found in the room of a woman and which is taken by her to be something quite harmless. She ties it to her apron strings.

In Winter in my Room
I came upon a Worm—
Pink, lank and warm—
....
Secured him by a string
To some thing neighbouring.

The worm stands for the male Force which she feels confident she can cope with. But very soon the Worm changes its aspects and becomes something commanding and dominating. The woman is at once fascinated by and terrified of this altered presence. The transition of the worm into something else is expressed thus :

A Snake with mottles rare
Surveyed my chamber floor
In features as the Worm before
But ringed with power—

In the end we find the woman breaking herself loose from this spell and withdrawing into isolation, banishing her desire and the memory of it with the words : "This was a dream".

Yet another poem that is frank in its analysis of passion's effect upon her is "My Life had Stood—a Loaded Gun."—The central imagery of the loaded gun needing the help of another to let it go symbolises the passive woman awakened by the active male hunter.

My Life has stood—a Loaded gun—
In Corners till a Day
The Owner passed - identified—
And carried Me away -
And now We roam in sovereign Woods—
And now we hunt the Doe—
And every time I speak for Him -
The Mountains straight reply

The emotional force in her nature has to be released by the owner This idea that she is senseless and inert without his love is indicated by the last stanza of the poem.

Though I than He —may longer live
He longer must—than I—
For I have but the power to kill,
Without—the Power to die—

While these poems deal with repression and subdued passion quite a large number of her poems depict passion openly. Poems such as "Come slowly—Eden !" and "Wild Nights Wild Nights !" are openly erotic. The acknowledged passion of these poems is repeated in her Master letters also written in the late 1850s. The passionately phrased letters throw much light upon the poems. The agony of the soul is revealed in a letter such as this, written with abandoned passion. "I am older— tonight, Master—but the love is the same—so are the moon and the crescent. If it had been God's will that I might breathe where you breathed—and find the place—myself—at night—if I (can) never forget that I am not with you—and that sorrow and frost are nearer than I—if I wish with a might I cannot repress—that mine were the Queen's place......What would you do with me if I came 'in white ?' Have you the little chest to put the Alive— in ? I want to see you more—Sir—than all I wish for in this world—and the wish—altered a little—will be my only one—for the skies."

Poems like "come slowly—Eden" ! and "A Bee his Furnished Carriage" employ the conventional bee flower imagery to convey physical desire. The exultation and thrill she experiences at the thought of his visit find expression in "If you were coming in the Fall" and " 'Tis so much joy!" Mixed with her passionate outbursts we get the tone of triumph and exultation in poems like "I 'm ceded - I've stopped being Theirs," and "Dare you see a soul at the White Heat ?" The poem challenges the reader to view her glowing searing passion without himself being blinded by its dazzling brightness. She asserts that though red is usually the bolour of love, her passion has rendered it white.

The theme of lovers' union also finds expression in the poetry of Emily Dickinson. The largest group among her love poems consists of those dealing with the actual meeting of lovers "Again —his voice is at the door" is typical of this group of poems, as it

recaptures the sublime emotional experience that the lovers get when they meet. The same intensity appears in another famous poem, "There came a Day at Summer's full"; but here we find the poet's assumption that the lover's earthly renuciation will gain for them heavenly bliss. It gives us the philosophy that denial here on earth entitles the lovers to perfect bliss in Heaven. But this mood of joy at renunciation is not always sustained. The anguish of separation can be felt in her poems, when faith in God also fails to comfort her. "I got so I could take his name" enables us to feel this agony. The first three stanzas portray the pains of renunciation and tensions of the final meeting better than any other love poems.

In her later love poems there is a marked change and a more definite reliance on God religion. Her efforts to sublimate her human passion into a divine experience have inspired her most artistic love poems. It is here that the mystic in Emily Dickinson appears. She constantly refers to herself as the Bride of Christ and rationalises her frustration here on earth. The religious explanation that she gives for it is that God deliberately denied the lovers happiness here on earth so that they may be given a chance of enjoying spiritual happiness These poems celebrate a heavenly marriage with her lover, but at times the figure of the earthly fades and the marriage assumes the mystical overtones of a celestial union with God. In this group of poems the poet fuses the sacred and profane aspects of human passion. The term 'bride' itself is used in varying meanings At first the term is used meaning an actual woman being married, then as the bride of death, and finally as the bride of God in Paradise. Charles Anderson has thrown light on this aspect of Emily Dickinson's poetry : "The struggle between earthly and heavenly love remains central to the mose successful poems in the marriage group. More accurately it is the source of tension she sets up by embodying the heavenly theme in earthly terms, then making these into images with celestial reference......Two stratagies of language are responsible for the success, the language of Status and the Signs which denote the elevation from one level to another."

A poem in which the human passion is transformed into divine love is "Title divine—is mine !"

Title divine—is mine !
The Wife—without the Sign !
Acute Degree—conferred on me—
Empress of Calvary !

The bulk of Emily Dickinson's poems on the theme of love in all its varied aspect and moods proves the great weight she attached to the subject Viewing the subject of love from her own personal experience and also from a philosophical point of view, she was convinced of the great importance of love. She once

declared "love is all there is" and equated it with God himself. Convinced that even God needed love and that love is meaningless unless reciprocated, she argued that God was dependent upon man's love for complete happiness. Her poems afford the most repturous glorification of love and also her affirmation that love triumphs over both life and death and achieves divine status. Though her love poems are based on her close examination of her own deep experience of love and passion, yet they transcend their particular contexts and boundaries to be come a universal account of any human soul that has suffered and endured. This is what guarantees immortality to Emily Dickinson's love poetry.

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Q. 68. Give a critical estimate of Emily Dickinson's Nature Poetry.

Or

Discuss Emily as a Poet of Nature.

Ans. A religious poet with keen sensibilities and a Puritan's thorough knowledge of the Bible could not help being intensely aware of Nature's glory that Jesus described in the words, "Consider the lilies how they grow; they toil not, they spin not: and yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Emily Dickinson knew this text well and her attitude of Nature was often coloured by this. For example, in a poem enlitled "How Happy is the little Stone" she applies this Biblical passage.

How happy is the little stone
That rambles in the road alone,
And doesn't care about careers,
And exigencies never fears.
Whose cout of elemental brown
A passing universe put on;
And independent as the sun,
Associates or glows alone,
Fulfilling absolute decree
In casual simplicty.

Emily Dickinson's nature poetry illuminates her philosophy. Her attitude to Nature is something complex and does not fall into a neat philosophy as Wordsworth's pantheistic belief in Nature. Unlike Wordsworth, Emily Dickinson had no faith in Nature as a guide for moral behaviour. Even while she is acutely conscious of Nature's beauty she is never given to sentimental enthusing over this aspect. Wordsworth always thought of Nature as a panacea for all evil, a healing influence, the ultimate solace for man. What Nature meant to him he explains in poems like *The Prelude* and *Tintern Abbey*. He claims that he recoginzes,

In nature and the language of the sense
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.

Emily Dsckinson did not share such ideas. Again Wordsworth says that Nature never betrays the soul that loves her. But Emily Dickinson's poems like "The Morning after Wo" and "I Dreaded that First Robin, so" analyse Nature's betrayal of those hearts that loved her best. Taking the case of the frost's beheading a flower she writes a poem entitled 'Apparently with No Surprise" where she questions the belief that Nature has some meaning. She seems to suggest that there can be no meaning at all in Nature if it allows such wanton deeds of destruction

This is not the only instance where Emily Dickinson is preoccupied with the destructive aspects of Nature. The violent, destructive powers of Nature like storms and lightning impressed her. And some of her best poems stress Nature's decaying and corruptive power. She had a keen eye also for the repulsive and the ugly in Nature One of her important Nature poems is "A Narrow Fellow in the Grass". dealing with the feeling of terror and awe that the snakes presence in the midst of the grass causes.

"The Mushrom is the Elf of Plants" is remarkoble for its blending of humour and fairy associon, and its suggestion of mystery and elusiveness found in nature.

'Tis vegetation's juggler
The germ of alibi ;
Doth like a bubble antedate,
And like a bubble hie

I feel as if the grass were pleased
To have it intermit ;
The surreptitious scion
Of summer's circumspect.

Had nature any outcast face
Could she a son contemn,
Had nature an Iscariot,
That mushroom,—it is him.

Emily's eyes are open to the beauties of Nature. One of the natural phenomena that attracted Emily Dickinson —was sunrise and sunset, e g. "I'll tell you how the sunrose." A number of mages give a vivid idea of the splendour and the sudden surpise of sunrise Another poem about the same subject makes use of a daring comparison that is at once original and arresting

Blazing in gold and quenching in Purple
Leaping like Leopards to the Skv

Then at the feet of the old Horizon
Laying her spotted face to die.

Another thing that filled Emily Dickinson with wonder and awe was the coming of summer rains and lightning storms The magnificent display of power behind these won her admiration which is evident in poems like "The wind Bagin to knead the Grass," and "There came a wind like a bugle."

Emily Dickinson's favourite things in Nature were flowers. She loved flowers dearly and her knowledge of them was deep and wide. She has writen poems on the rose, the buttercup and the daisy. But these are all written in the conventional way. A poem on the arbutus has the best traits of her poetry, economy of expression, precision and novelty

Pink—small-and punctual—
Aromatic—low
Covert—in April—
Candid—iu May—

Descriptions of birds from a considerable part of Emily Dickinson's nature poetry. In "One of the ones that Midas Touched" she sings about the oriole and the blue jay is the subject of "No Brigadier throughout the fear." Her portrait of the humming bird is more famous than these. The Roby-throated little singer is described thus :

A Rout of Evanescence
With a revolving wheel—
A resonance of Emerald—
A Rush of cochineal—
And every Blossom on the Bush
Adjust its tumbled Head
The mail from Tunis probably.

Here description is less important than evocation of the mystery and elusiveness in Nature.

In her nature poetry Emily Dickinson almost always passes beyond mere physical description either to consider the ambivalence of Nature's beauty or to give a hint of the mystery and puzzle benind Nature's appearance. She loved little things in nature—best birds and insects add her playful fancy has produced some of the best genre poems about them. She has given a very interesting caricature of bees and their ceaseless activity.

Bees are Black with Gilt Surcingles—
Buccameers of Buzz.
Ride abroad in ostentation
And subsist on Fuzz.

The seasons occupy considerable space in the nature poetry of

Emily Dickinson. In the repetition of the season cycles, the dead of winter and the renewal of life in spring Emily Dickinson saw something intriguing and captivating. Of all seasons she loved spring best as it symbolises rebirth. Brearhless with excitement she watched the stirring of life in spring appear in a thousand little ways and with the magic of her words she has celebrated these things in poems like "An Altered Look about the Hills" and "New feet within my garden Go." It is not always joy alone that spring arouses in the poet's mind. For all its beauty spring reminds the poet that its hopes and promises are deceptive as winter is bound to follow. One of the best poems about Spring that Emily Dickinson has written is "A Light exists in Spring."

Summer also has been treated poetically by Emily Dickinson though her poems on summer are not as successful as those on spring. Whenever she has written about summer, it is the death of summer that seems to fill her mind. In a memorable poem about the departure of summer she writes:

As imperceptibly as Grief
The summer lapsed away—
Too imperceptible at last
To seem like perfidy.

Winter exercised no fascination on the poet, though she has written a few poems on winter, the most remarkable among them being "Its sifts from Leaden Sieves" and "Like Brooms of steel." "There s a certain slant of Light" also describes the slaniting winter rays that have a depressing effect on the soul.

To sum up, Emily Dickinson's nature poetry is vibrant with vitality There has been nature poetry before her and since. But it must be said to her credit that she revitalized the old cliches about Nature and drew our attention to much in Nature's bewildering variety that was formerly ignored and neglected. Today the idea of juxtaposing the ugly and the beautiful is not considered as something novel or revolutionary. But in the time of Emily Dickinson it was not tried by any one else. Emily Dickinson's nature poetry will never cease to inspire sensitive readers. The last word about it can never be said for with each reading will discover in them new ideas and fresh nuances. Even to the casual reader, the merits of these poems are evident—a unique approach to things in Nature, a minute observation, a thorough grasp of the evanescent and fleeting and dramatic in Nature, a readiness to portray the unusual, the grotesque and the ugly, and the halo of mystery and strangeness that only Emily Dickinson could invest the most commonplace object with.

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Q. 69. Consider Emily Dickinson as a mystic poet.

Or

Comment on Emily Dickinson's treatment of God and Religion.

Ans. When Emily Dickinson shut herself away from the world and lived as a recluse, the world brought forward the explanation that she was taking flight from an unhappy love affair. It is sensible to assume that frustration in love was not the real reason that mabe the sensitive soul of Emily Dickinson to retire from the active word around her. The explanations must be sought for in the deeply serious nature of the poet, the deep fountain within, capable of nourishing and sustaining her. Her poetry reveals her as a mystic in the true sense of the word, a person of far keener perceptions than the poeple of the mundane world around her.

Emily Dickinson was a poet of romantic sensibility. Her sensitive soul throbbed to the song of the oriole, to the ray of light in writer and to the thousand little things that made her world glow with beauty The reltionship between herself and nature is expressed by her in her letter to Mr. Higginson whose 'scholar' she was. "You ask of my companions. Hill Sir, and the sundown, and a dog large as myself, that my father brought me. They are better then beings because they know, but do not tell ; and the noise on the pool at noon excels my paino." The poetess who could think thus certainly had the spirit of romanticism in her.

To Emily Dickinson ours is a 'remarkable world' and everything in it smacks of the heavenly.

To hear an oriole sing
May be a common thing
On only a divine.

The diffence is in the person's power of perception.

The "tune is in the tree"
The sceptic showeth me ;
"No, Sir ! In thee."

The slant of light in winter, the humming bird, the bird that came down the walk with eyes like frightened beads, the bee the clover, the moor and the praire all fill her with exultaion and rapture. She could very well say with Wordsworth that to her

The meanest flower that blows
Can give thoughts that often lie
Too deep for tears.

When Emily Dickinson seapks of the common things of life, it is as if we share the shock of insight, the sudden shift from the Manifold into the One. For she has the rare ability to see the 'world in a grain of sand and Heaven in a wild flower.'

The geart mystic need not be convetional in religion. Often it is the other way. In their clear perception of truth, mystic poets do not repuire the help of dogma. One important thing that strikes the reader of Emily Dickinson's poetry is her spirit of religious unorthodoxy. She shared Emerson's individualism and in the poem "Keeping the Sabbath" she makes it clear that she relies more on her soul to lead her to Heaven and to God than all the sermons and church-goings that conventionat religion recommends.

Like the romantic poets Blake and Coleridge, Emily Dickinson discarded the away of Reason and relied more on intuiton and imagination. The poet Blake asserted ; "The world of Imagination is the world of Eternity...... The world of Imagination is Infinite and Eternal." This imagination leads on to the vision of truth.

A critic of Emily Dickinson's—Conrad Aiken suggests that her mystical isolation or individulism may be traced to her not finding in her immediate environment one of her own stature, with whom she could admit or discuss the things that were important to her. He argues that "she lacked the energy or effrontery to voyage out into the unknown in search of such companionship ; and that lacking this she became easily a prey to the current Emersonian doctrine of mystical individualism. In this connection it is permissble to suggest that her extreme self-scelusion and secrecy was both a protest and a display—a kind of vanity masquerading as modesty. She became increasingly precious of her person as of her thought— She believes that anything she says, however brief will be of importance; however cryptic will be deciphered " But it does not seem quite relevant to attribute vanity to a poet who did not care to have her poems published.

There is a playfulness and irrverence about Emily Dickinson's attitude towards God that runs contray to the Puritan attitude towards Him. In "Pappa Above" she mocks our anthorpomorphic concept of God. In her poms she refers to him as "a noted clergyman" and flippantly salutes him as "Burglar, banker, father." In a poem 'Drowning' she says :

The Marker's cordial visage,
However good to see,
Is shunned, we must admit it
Like an aduersity."

But in spite of her scornful attitude to the traditional picture of the Puritan's God, we find in her true piety and a deep faith in Heaven and Immortality. This faith is given expression to in the poem :

"I never saw a moor,
I never saw the sea;
Yet know I how the heather looks
And what a wave must be.

I never spoke with God,
Nor visited in heaven;
Yet certain am I of the spot
As if the chart were given."

"Her real reverence, the reverence that made her a mystic poet of the finest sort, was reserved for Nature, which seemed to her a more manifest and more beautiful evidence of Divine will than creeds and churches This she saw odserved, loved, with a burning simplicity and passion which nevertheless did not exclude her very agile sense of humour." For a clear understanding of Emily Dickinson' s greatness as a mystical qoet one has to go to her poems entitled Life, Time and Eternity. The idea of immortality hovered round the poet and saved her musings on death from becoming morbid Her evolutivn as a poet is marked by her early leaning towards grave-yardism, and then her gradual shift towards the Emersonian belief in the largeness and harmony of nature. At times she seems to be filled with terror, contemplating her destiny. Out of anguish caused by her contemplation of life has come the poem "My life has stood a loaded gun", a great poem, an allegory, whose reverberations are infinite, as in great music." With this power to say the unsayable, to hint of the unknowable, Emily Dickinson remains among the seers of literature.

In trying thus to express what defies expression, the mystical poet often resorts to the use of symbols, as in the beautiful poem the 'Hound of Heaven' by Francis Thompson. Emily Dickinson too fincs terrible symbols to convey her profouhd impressions. She compares the experiences of suffering to dying of the cold. Escaping from suffering is like getting away from the clutches of a fierce monster more dead than alive. Two picces where her power of using symbols is at its finest are "My Life had Stood a Loaded Gun" and "The Chariot." Indeed Emily Dickinson was a visionary to whom truth came with exclusive finality and who sought to give expression to these truths in images of starting clarity.

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Q. 70. 'The sharp, intense image is the poet's best instrument.' Discuss with reference to ihe poems of Emily Dickinson.

Or

Write a note on E. Dickinson's imagery.

Ans. Emily Dickinson wrote to a friend : "Do you look out tonight ? The moon rides like a girl through a topoz town." This brief descriptive sketch is a telling example of Emily Dickinson's unique gift—the gift of evoking unforgettable pictures in the minds of the readers. This unique ability to suggest pictures, this felicitous use of images makes a reading of her poetry aesthetically rewarding.

As Shakespeare puts it :

The poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling
Doth glance from heaven to earth from earth to heaven;
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shepes and gives to airy nothings
A local habitation and a name.

It is this imaginative faculty that Emily Dickinson as a poetess had in abundance. All the great poets of the world make use of images, and have become immortal for their imagery. So is Emily.

Nature—flowers, birds, animals, hills. mountains, sea-life—is the chief source of her imagery. In "A Bird came Down the Walk" the bird is described with accuracy None of its little movements escapes the loving notice of the poet. Hence we have a picture startingly vivid.

He glanced with rapid eyes
That hurried abroad—
The looked like frightend beads, I thought
He stirred his velvet head.

Poets sometimes make use of strange exotic images to describe something ordinary as Shelley does in "Ode to the West Wind." Describing the profuse fall of autumn leaves Shelley says that the 'pestilence-stricken multitude' fled from the presence of the West Wind "like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing." This trick of investing the ordinary every-day objects with a halo of the strange and the distant is found in Emily Dickinson's verse also. The humming bird, a visitor to her little garden is described thus :—

A route of evanescence
With a revolving wheel
A resonance of emerald,
A rush of cochineal ;
And every blossom on the bush
Adjusts its fumble head.—
The mail from Tunis, probably.
As easy morning's ride.

Here Emily Dickinson was reaching out to distant places and remote scenes on flights of fancy for her images. Her imagination even leapt up to heaven and drew celestial images as in the poem beginning "To Flight Aloud is Very Brave" where she is of opinion that those that "charge within the bosom the cavalry of woe" are wortheir far than those that flight around.

We trust, in plumed procession,
For such the angels do,
Rank after rank, with even feet
And uniforms of snow.

The charm of Emily Dickinson lies in her unrivalled ability to convey varied states of mind through sugge tive pictures. Abstractions lend themselves to pictorial treatment at the hands of this woman who was a genius. Speaking about the brain that runs efficiently the poet suggests that the slightest damage remains unremediable. This is expressed in a powerful though homely image :

The brain within its groove
Runs evenly and true ;
But let a splinter swerve,
'Twere easier for you
To put the water back
When floods have slit the hills,
And scooped a turnpike for themselves,
And blotted out the mills !

In the "Chariot", every image is precise and, moreover, not merely, beautiful, but fused with the central idea. Every image extends and intensifies every other. The third stanza especially shows Miss Dickinson's power to fuse, into a single order of perception a heterogeneous series : the children, the grain, and the setting sun (time) have the same degree of credibility, the first subtly preparing for the last. The sharp 'gazing before grain' instils into nature a cold vitality of which the qualitative richness has infinite depth. The content of death in the poem eludes explicit definition. There is a gentleman taking a lady out for a drive. The terror of death is objectified through this figure of a genteel driver, who is made ironically to serve the end of immortality. This is the heart of the poem. Another great poem dealing with the question of death has remarkable images:—

I started early, took my dog,
And visited the sea,
The mermaids tn the basement
Came out to look at me,

And frigates in the upper floor
Extended hempen hands,
Presuming me to be a mouse
A ground, upon the sands.

But no man moved me till the tide
Went past my simple shoe,
And past my apron and my belt,
And past my bodice too.

And made as he would eat me up
As wholly as a dew
Upon a dandelion's sleeve—
And then I started too

And he—he followed close behind;
I felt his silver heel !
Upon my ankle,—then my shoes

Would overflow with pearl.
Until me met the solid town,
No man he seemed to know;
And bowing with a mighty look
At me, the sea withdrew.

This poem is allegorical, the sea is here the traditional symbol of death. Moral and mystical experiences, the power of love and the agony of suffering are all vividly conveyed through powerful images. Yet another example of her startling use of images is her description of suffering : one who comes out of suffering is like one coming out of the grip of monster. The poem is remarkable for sea-imagery.

And here are images describing either the lover or God :—

My life has stood—a Loaded Gun
In corners – till a Day
The Owner passed – identified
And carried me away

And now we roam in Sovereign Woods—
And now we hunt the Doe—
And every time I speak for Him
The Mountains straight reply—

And do I smite, such cardial light
Upon the valley glow—
It is as Vesuvian face
Had let its pleasure through—

And when at Night—our good Day done—
I guard my Master's head—
'Tis better than the Elder—Duck's
Deep Pillow—to have shared—

To foe of His—I'm deadly foe—
Name stir the second time—
On whom I lay a Yellow Eye—
Or an emphatic thumb—

Though I than He—may longer live
He longer must—than I—
For I have but the power to kill,
Without—the power to die.

"This power to say the unsayable—to hint of the unknowable is the power of the seer", says Louise Bogan about Emily Dickinson. Having in reality withdrawn from this world Emily Dickinson doubted if her poetry was "alive". She wanted Mr. T. W. Higginson to tell her if it breathed, if it was alive. The answer is a most emphatic yes and the reason for the poems being alive is the teeming images in them. Some one has said of

her, "she kept in touch with reality by the clearest and finest of the senses—the sense of sight. Perhaps the great vitality of contact by vision is the essence in part of her originality.

Q 71 Comment on the technical peculiarities found in the Poetry of Emily Dickinson.

Ans. Emily Dickinson's unique poetic method was as puzzling to readers and publishers as the mystery surrounding her personality. **Thomas Wentworth Higginson** to whom Emily Dickinson sent with all his literary background was totally unprepared to accept their criginality and was absolutely unable to appreciate their artistic perfection. Convinced that good poetry had to show regular meters and exact rhymes, he was unable to appreciate the authentic poetic talent of Emily Dickinson. One of the very first poems of Emily Dickinson that were sent for the critical appraisal of Higginson went thus :

Safe in their Albaster Chambers—
Untouched by Morning
And untouched by Noon—
Lie the meek members of the Resurrection
Rafter of Satin—and Roof of Stone !

The inexact rhyme of "Noon' and 'Slone', the irregular iambic pentameter, the strange use of dashes, and the erratic capitalisation are all distinct features that Emily Dickinson's poetry retained. The fact that she never meant to publish her poems made her shrug off the suggestions of Higginson regarding the irregularities of her verse.

Emily Dickinson was primarily interested in the thought or content of poetry and not in its perfect phrasing or musical cadence. As **John Pickard** points out : "What Emerson wrote in 'Merlin' defining a poet's task may be applied to the delicate young woman who practised the art in the seclusion of her room. This is what Emerson wrote about the function of poetry :

It chords should ring as blows the breeze
Free, peremptory, clear,
No Jingling screnader's art
....
The kingly bard
Must smite the chords rudely and hard
As with hammer or with mace,
That they may render back
Artist thunder which conveys
Secrets of the solar track.

Though Emily Dickinson started writing poetry as a remedy for

her soul's illness, she no doubt believed in the higher significance of poetry. In one of her poems "Tell all the Truth, but tell it Slant" ! she gives expression to her idea of what poetry should attempt and how. While claiming that poetry must seek to illuminate hidden areas of knowledge and beauty and Truth, she believes that indirection is the method of poetry. In her emphasis on what poetry should do to a person, or the response it should evoke from a sensitive soul, she was apt to ignore the total organisation of a poem or conventional rules regarding poetry. She described the emotional response to poetry thus : "If I read a book (and) it makes my whole body so cold no fire ever can warm me. I know that is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off I know *that* is poetry. There are the only ways I know it. Is there any other way ?"

- The high esteem in which she held the art of poetry is evident in her poem "essentials oils—are wrung" where she compares the poetic process to the extraction of perfume from rose buds. The poem asserts that the artist's fragrant creation will outlast the rose and even the mortal ar.....

Emily Dickinson's poems are difficult partly because of her peculiar fascination with words. She often used words in their root meanings and enriched the association and implication of words by employing subtle connotations. Her great concern was to select the most appropriate word from among a list of words having approximately the same meaning. The manuscripts of her poems show her repeated efforts to select the most appropriate word from among a list of variants. For a line that was finally edited as "In eddies of the sun" she had given the following variations ;

In fathoms in the sun
In rapids of the sun
In gambols with the sun
In frenzies with the sun
For frenzy of the sun
In antics in the sun.

In his dook, *Emily Dickinson's poetry : Stairway of Surprise*, Charles Anderson writes : "Substitution of concrete terms for the abstract ones actually intended was her strategy for achieving vivid immediacy, and the opposite for giving transcendent value to the homely juxtaposition of words out of different connotative spheres she employed for ironic contrast as with the legal and amorous ; and abrupt changes from one level of discourse to another for rhetorical shock, as from the serious to the comic, from eloquence to bald statement.

Conciseness was a passion with Emily Dickinson and this may be traced to the economy and frugality that was inherent in the

Puritan community of Amherst. In this pursuit of brevity she ruthlessly cut through syntax and ignored grammar. Often verbs are left out and as for conjunctions and prepositions they are hardly ever used. Sometimes she employed the local pronunciation of a word instead of the standard pronounciation. She never made her poems long or smoothly flowing. Because of her extreme and rigorous economy her poems at times read like shorthand notations rather than poetry. But their very brevity gives them a peculiar vibrancy that is exciting.

One of the factors that give to her poetry a quaint flavour is her use of colloquial expressions. She would prefer the local spelling to the standard spelling of a word. As examples we may take 'boquet' and 'Febuary'. Difficulty is also caused by her unique use of the subjunctive voice to create a continuing present tense as in the line "Eclipses be predicated." Grammatical lapses are also frequent as in 'at you and I' and "It is Him." These verbal peculiarities of Emily Dickinson have outraged those critics who insist on meticulous observance of rules. But these very imperfections of Emily Dickinson's verse are the source of much delight to her readers.

She had also an enormous fondness for dashes, and her use of dashes is highly perplexing. She used dashes indiscriminately in preference to formal or conventional punctuations. Her dashes come in to indicate a metrical pause or where commas are to be used and sometimes even in the place of semicolons or period. Her abundant use of dashes often puts the meaning of the poem in jeopardy and it makes interpretation of the poems extremely difficult. In some cases the dashes are highly effective and enhance the meaning. The following verse of Emily Dickinson illustrates both the strength and weakness of her use of dashes.

Some—Work for Immortality—
The chiefer part, for Time—
He—compensates—immediately—
The former—checks—on Fame—

Slow Gold—Everlasting—
The Bullion of today—
Contrastest with the Currency
Of Immortality.

In this poem the poetess expresses her idea that a few select people create for immortality rather than for immediate recognition or fame, the idea is made clear in some lines by the dashes. But some of the dashes seem arbitary and tending to obscure the meaning. There is no doubt about the fact that the uses of dashes meant something important to the poet and was part of a campaign against the rigidity of conventional form of poetry.

The passage quoted above illustrates yet another peculiarity of Emily Dickinson's verse—her erratic use of Capitals. She used

capitals for nouns, adjectives, adverbs and verbs. When she capitalized a word, it was as if she was emphasizing these words or lending new dignity to them. Sometimes capitalization seems to be having neither rhyme nor reason. Generally speaking the use of capitals is an expression of her tendency to overstate.

In metrical pattern Emily Dickinson did not make any innovation. She did not consciously try to be metrically shocking or daring and never made use of 'vers libre'. She clung to a metrical pattern that was familiar to her from childhood four iambic lines, alternating three and four stresses a line with the second and fourth lines rhyming. This was her favourite metrical pattern though she altered this and formed endless variations in order to avoid monotony. She used eight-line stanzas at times and changed the iambic for trochaic metre. She introduced flexibility into the traditional set metres and loosened them and gave them the easy natural flow of conversational prose. Though she did not discard rhyme altogether. "She abandoned the stiff limitations of exact rhyme, where the final sound and accent were precirely repeated, returning to the much older poetic practice of approximate rhyme, 'identical and vowel rhyme, (as in "move—remove", "see—buy) imperfect rhyme (same vowel sounds followed by different Consonants, as in 'thing-in' "us-dust") and suspended rhyme (different vowel sounds followed by the same consonant sounds, for example star-door' 'reach—touch). These rhymes were selected at will, and she freely varied the patten within a single poem or stanza. Besides adding a great suppleness to her poetry these approximate rhymes often capture the jarring discords and painful doubts expressed by the thought. However the balance of content and form is not always so harmonious. Often the unusual rhymes seem unnecessary : the metre frequently becomes monotonous while the subject matter remains too intense.

Emily Dickinson's efforts to pack verse with intense meaning reminds us of Hopkins' poetry with its breaking loose from all fetters of conventions. Her violation of the rules of grammar and syntax and her ruthless omission of words have enabled her to capture the spontaneity and excitement of her thoughts. The genuineness of her inspiration and the tremendous vitality of her poetic force and her lively imagination have made the objections raised by her fastidious critics irrelevant.

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Q 72. How far does Emily Dickinson's poetry reflect her personality ?

Ans. The one person who had a long literary association with Emily Dickinson wrote to Thomas Wentworth Higginson whose article in *The Atlantic Monthly*—'Letter to a Young Contributor' gave to Emily Dickinson the determination to expose her poems to the scrutiny and critical appraisal of some one in the following manner :—

Are you too deeply occupied to say if my verse is alive ?
The Mind is so near itself—it cannot see, distinctly and
I have none to ask—
Should you think it breathed—and had you the leisure
to tell ;
I should feel quick gratitude
If I make the mistake—that you dared to tell me—
would give me
Sincere honor—toward you—
I enclose my name—asking you, if you please—She to
tell me
What is true ?
That you will not betray me—it is needless to ask since
is it's own pawn. *Honor*

Emily Dickinson had never the slightest desire to publish her poems. She wrote to Higginson that to publish her poems was as foreign to her thought "as Firmament to Fin," She cared neither for fame nor for success. What then was the reason behind her poetic attempts ? Why did she write such an abundance of verse ? To answer this is not easy. Here was a yonng woman who loved and experienced all areas of life so intensely that the very heat and intensity of her sensations are passed on to the poetry she composed. To her, writing poetry was an outlet, a safety-valve that saved her from being destroyed entirely by the poignancy of her emotional crisis. That is why her poems are highly personal. They rob with her emotions.

Again, Emily Dickinson was one who however inadequately the Divine force which she cryptically called 'Circumference'.

The fact that Emily Dickinson is above all a very private poet has contributed among other things to the enormous popularity especially in the recent times. The popularity accorded to her has been unrivalled except by that enjoyed by Frost. The wider significance of her poetry lies in the fact that despite the deeply personal element, Emily Dickinson has succeeded in giving to much of her verse universality She grappled with her personal feelings and in the process transformed them into something general and applicable to the entire struggling humanity.

The philosophy that Emily Dickinson evolved out of her experiences and observation of life is also her own. A number of definition poems starting "Expercince is", "Love is", "Ecstasy is", 'Renunciation is' etc. record her original and personal philosophy.

Though she referred to the Bible, to Shakespeare and to other writers such as Whitman, Keats, The Brownings, Ruskin, Sir Thomas Browne, yet she priced and maintained her individuality. Her poetry helped to preserve her individuality and afforded her with an adequate release for her pent up yearnings which could have upset her balance in a disastrous way. Withdrawn

from the world, she mastered the art of self introspection and her delicate analysis of emotion finds artistic expression in her poems. The hidden areas of the soul fascinated her and she had to grapple with her own passionate nature and resolve her mental conflicts. In her love-poems we find a frank record of her personal sorrow and misery. Her love for a particular man and the tempest that raged within her soul on being separated find po tic utterance in her exquisite love poems. Her final efforts to sublimate her passion can also be seen in them. The crisis in her life was so devastating that if she did not have her poetry she would have been rendered insane. Rather than escape life, she fronted it on the most trying battleground—in her own spirit and mastered it through her art. In more ways than one her poetry was her triumphant 'Letter to the World That never write to Me," "This letter to the world" that her poetry constituted was never intended by the writer to reach the public. The reason is that her poetry being an intimate biography of her soul could not naturally be exposed to public scrutiny Her inner soul was there in the words and to give this to the world was unthinkable.

Her religious verse also is an expression of her individual faith. Her refusal to conform to the religious enthusiasm of her age, her doubts, her open questioning, her scepticism regarding the hard dogmas about God and her playful qusstioning of the doctrine of original sin are all found in her religious poetry. Emily Dickinson was definitely oriented as her recurring themes indicate. But her approach to religion was mystical rather than dogmatic and she relied on her own personal intuition and judgement to perceive largely on her own experiences rather than on classical or literary traditions for her vivid imagery and telling expressions.

Her death poems are the records of death-scenes which she witnessed too frequently. She watched numerous funeral processions passing by her door. Into her nature poetry also she brought her individuality. Her doubts appear here also for she does not accept the traditional belief that-nature reflects God's divine scheme. She questions the Divine Design in creation, discarding the old serene confidence in God's divine plan. Emily Dickinson was not a profound thinker or original philosopher. The areas of life and nature that most interested her were narrow and personal. Most of her poems are inspired by her own poetic ambitions and her own religious questionings. Though her life was filled with pain and anguish she sublimated these and evolved a triumphant exhilaration of life's processes. And in doing this she was able to pass from the personal to the universal. In her poetry "the provinsional and private were often translated into enduring universal art."

Q 73 What do you know about Emily Dickinson's place as a poetess in the history of American poetry ?

Or

Review Emily criticism up-to-date.

Or

Critically evaluate Emily's poetry.

Ans. A contemporary of Christina Rossetti and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Emily Dickinson can be placed any of the greatest women poets of any country. She is like the Greek Praxilla (5 Century B C). or like the English Marianne Moore, Edith Sitwell and Laura Riding. The following review of her work by different critics would help us to evaluate her work from different angles.

Emily Dickinson's poems were first brought to light by Col. Thomas Wentworth Higginson in 1890. In his examination, her poetry belonged to what Emerson called "the poetry of portfolio." It has quality of suggestiveness. It contained "flashes of wholly original and profound insight into nature and life; words and phrases exhibiting an extraordinary vividness of description and imagination."

Some other critics put her in the metaphysical tradition of poetry. Dean Howells, writing in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in 1891, found in her poetry the quality of suggestiveness "that seems compact of both Emerson and Blake with a touch of Heine too." He viewed her grammatical and metrical irregularities with sympathy and perceptiveness : "it is the soul of an abrupt, exalted New England woman that speaks in such brokenness. The range of all the poems is the loftiest; and sometimes there is a kind of swelling lift, an almost boastful rise of feeling..." Elizabeth Sergeant and Norman Forester found in Emily's preoccupation with the themes of love and death something "majestic" and reminiscent of the influence of Donne and the Metaphysicals. The Metaphysical quality of her verse has also been seen by critics like Yvor Winters, R. P. Blackmur, Allen Tate, etc.,,who found that she had anticipated the modernist trend in poetry, like Hopkins on this side of the Atlantic, in its quality of irony, metaphor, symbol, esotericism, pun, etc., and that she was a living link to the Metaphysical chain.

A few more opinions are given below :—

1. CONRAD AIKEN :—Emily Dickinson was "the most perfect flower of New England Transcendentalism."

2. ALLEN TATE : Emily had some intellectual quality of Donne and Cowley and the Metaphysicals. Like Donne she perceived abstractions and thought sensation.

3. R. P. BLACKMUR (1936) places the poet somewhere between Baudelaire and surrealism.

4. A. C. WARD : "Perhaps next to Whitman the greatest American poet of the last century."

5. Reviewing her poetry for the *London Daily News* (Jan. 2, 1891), a critic saw in her only "bad poetry...divorced from meaning, from music, from grammar, from rhyme."

6. MAURICE THOMSON too thought that Dickinson carried "the faults of Emerson's verse-style into absurdity" and that she seemed "to wander through the wilderness of phrase possibilities only to choose with indiscretion at the critical moment."

7. MARTHA says that Dickinson's verse "is often cryptic in thought and unmelodious in expression...compression and epigrammatical ambush are her aids, she proceeds, without preparation or apology, by sudden, sharp, zigzags. What intelligence a reader has, must be exercised in the poetic gains of hare-and-hounds, where ellipses, inversions, and unexpected climaxes mislead those who pursue sweet reasonableness." But she praised Emily's "sensitiveness to irony and paradox," her "transcendental humour," "association with nature" and her powers as "a sensitive observer."

MARK TWAIN (1835-1910)

Q 74. Give a general estimate of Mark Twain as a novelist.

Or

Comment on the contribution of Mark Twain as a novelist and evaluate his place and contribution with special reference to 'The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn'.

Ans. His Popularity

Mark Twain's popularity as a novelist has changed. In his own days he was a controversial figure. When a school-boy, T. S. Eliot's parents advised him not to go through Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*. His works were condemned by contemporary journals as funny, journalistic efforts. J. G. Holland regards him as a "mere fun-maker of ephemeral popularity". John Nicoll says that Twain is a master of a degenerate style', one who has "done perhaps more than any other living writer to lower the literary tone of English speaking people." But soon Mark Twain's genius got recognition. He was hailed as a great genius. Hemingway rightly evaluated him and said: "All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn*......All American writing comes from that. There was nothing before. There has been nothing as good since."

His Output

Samuel L. Clemens better known as Mark Twain (1835-1910) wrote under the pen name because he was chiefly satirical and humorous. He published *The Celebrated Frog of Calaveras Country and Other Sketches* in 1867. His fame spread with the publication of the *Innocents Abroad*. His other works include *Roughing It* (1872). *The Gilded Age* (1874), *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), *A Tramp Abroad* (1879), *The Prince and the Pauper* (1880), *Life on the Mississipi* (1883), *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) and some other works. His best known works are *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*.

His work has a universal appeal. For example, his *Huckleberry Finn* represents not only American life, men and women and their ways of living in that country, but also the entire human world of virtues and vices, of quality and corruption. It highlights certain essential and basic human motives, which are American as well as universal.

His Realism

Though his literature is known as "romance of the youth", Twain is a realist because of his local colour and characterization.

He is the social chronicler of his times. His three books *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *Life on the Mississippi*, and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* significantly contributed to the development of American literature He reacted against the sentimentality and idealism of his age.

Twin practised realism under European influence, especially that of Darwin and Spencer. He has immortalized the life of the Mississipil and Hannibal, the landscapes, the physical conditions, the struggles of a pilot and the formidable environment of the West in his novels. He was a great realist who reacted vigorously against the romantic excesses of Walter Scott's pattern of romances and medievalism. His interests were deep rooted in the life around him. His realism is picturesque, vivid and powerful. It is not a photographic representation but a pen-picture of life with a colouring of imagination. He has evoked with the power of his imagination the world of his boyhood days. His characters have the traits of the West, the region which he so fondly enlivens in his novels. They are the people from the life belonging to the lowly humble, down-trodden class. His use of Frontier dialects is another proof of his being a realist.

His Humour

It is as a humorist-novelist together and not merely as a novelist that Mark Twain is immortal. San Fransisco called him " the wild humorist of the plains". His humour descended from the West and the Frontier. His humour has two categories : (1) childish and innocent humour, and (2) witty and sober humour. His is not an intellectual humour, but the boisterous and the loud laughter of the pioneers. Chief sources of his humour are exaggeration, understatement, puns, malapropisms, misquotations of the Bible and the classics, etc. His humour is mixed with sympathy for the underdog and the crushed. Many a time his humour is forceful and satirical. The tratits of his humour emphasized by Brooks were "to degrade beauty, to debase distinction, and thus simplify the life of the man with an eye single to the chance.' His humour, as mentioned by Ludwig Lawis hn, was also directed against pretentiousness and falseness. Much of his humour lay in his narration and the employment of colloquial expressions and various types of dialects. In this respect he is comparable to Artemus Ward. Like the American humour in general Twain's humour also becomes occasionally cruel and satirical and bitter. So Twain is righly the 'funyman of America.'

His Pessimism

Mark Twain sees the gloomy side of life too. His personal life like that of Moliere was also full of personal tragedies. The death of his daughter (Susy Clemens) and the humiliation of bankruptcy were the most tragic events of his life. However, his

is not a despair of personal bereavement but of country—ultimately of man. The disease of epilepsy in his youngest daughter Jean and his own failing health also furthered his gloom.

• This gloom and pessimism of Mark Twain gets reflected in *What is Man*? and in *The Mysterious Stranger* (1916). Like Dickens he is able to blend humour and pathos.

As a Social Chronicler

Mark Twain is a painter of manners and customs of the American society of his day. Rightly says the French critic Maurice Le Breton : "Mark Twain's work is a panorama of the West in all its variety. He has observed everything : landscapes, environments, physical characteristics of the inhabitants, ways of ilfe, customs, beliefs, superstitions. Through him we know the little Missouri town, asleep on the banks of the river, with its houses rising in steps from the levee, surrounded by its circle of wooded hills terminating near the Mississipi in sheer cliffs pierced by caves." American landscape assumes for readers, native and foreign, a vivdness and reality that is rarely seen in other writers. No other writer has so faithfully described the Mississippi river with its rapids and its half-submered logs feared by the navigators, the wooded isles and dismal cotton plantations of the south. The Arkansas farm introduced in *Huckleberry Finn* is minutely described. The novelist does not omit the clean rooms, the floors covered with rugs, the hearth framed in wellscrubbed red brick, the native knick-knacks on the mantlepiece and the popular prints on the wall. The entire West flies past the reader in a succession of precise, faithful images.

Mark Twain did not stop with depicting social customs and manners. He went a step further and satirised them. In *Life on Mississippi* and *Huckleberry Finn*, he evinces his keen penchant for social satire. His hatred of social injustice which he associated historically with feudalism and absolute monarchy was developed in the two stories with English setting—"The Prince and the Pauper" (1882) and "A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court" (1889) *The Huckleberry Finn* is a quest for social freedom and equality between the white and the black races. It is a holy war against a social crime, slavery. It is an attempt to show that a free brute is better than a polished parrot emprisoned in a golden cage called "civilization".

There has been difference of opinion regarding Mark Twain as a social critic. Bernard Shaw regarded him as "a socialist before all else" and once wrote to him "I am persuaded that the future historian of America will find your works as indispensable to him as a French historian finds the political tracts of Voltaire." Others feel that Mark Twain suppressed much of his real opinions.

His Narrative Gift

Gifted with a marvellous mimetic ability, Mark Twain was a superb story-letter. This enabled him to hold his readers enthralled, and to entertain audiences in his home and in public auditoriums with equal facility. Gladys Bellamy in *Mark Twain as a Literary Artist* points out how Mark Twain was an adept at carefully leading his readers and audience through calculated effects and contrived suspense to effective climaxes. He was a consummate master of the 'tall tale' as is proved by his stories about the jumping frog and the blue jay. These along with "The Man that Corrupted Handleyburg" are imperishable narratives of American literature. Beginning with 'The Adventures of Tom Swayer' Mark Twain showed himself to be a novelist of the first rank. The books that followed fulfilled the expectat on created by this work.

His Characterization

The greatest success of Mark Twain as a novelist is his genius for creating memorable characters and for breathing the breath of life into them. Perhaps his portait gallery is small, but it is memorable: Tom Swayer, Huckleberry Finn and the runaway nigger Jim, Colonel Sellers and Roxy. Mark Twain is a remarkable analyser of character. Tom Swayer proves his "phenomenal understanding of the American small boy, and of those aspects of human nature which expand in the small, wide-settled villages of inland America. The tramp, the loafer, the peddler all the local characters that might have significance in the eyes of the small boy are represented with fascinating realism, as well as the more respectable but less interesting domestic characters—but of all them viewed at all times through the eyes of the boy. As for Huck Finn, "he wanders into immortality, swinging a dead cat." This romantic young outcast with his secret wisdom and his much envied freedom is one of the most real figures of fiction. This lovable boy with his 'moral improvisation', as W. H. Auden puts it, is indeed immortal. Jim with his superstitions and his inherent goodness,—refuses to leave Tom Swayer till a doctor is called to attend his leg, he is sure to stay in our imagination for ever. Aunt Polly, widow Douglas, Aunt Sally, Uncle Silas are all vividly drawn characters. Yet more interesting are the 'lowdown humbugs and frauds who get on board Huck's and Jim's canoe, and pretend to be "the late Dauphin son of Looy Sixteen and Mary Antonette" and the righful Duke of Bridgewater." Among the characters ol Mark Twain not the least important is the river Mississippi for he endowed this river with personlity, making it vibrant, mysterious, powerful.

His style

One of the great things that Mark Twain achieved in "Huckleberry Finn" and other novels is the creation of a prose

style suited to the American ethos. Though many writers before Twain had tried to exploit the possibilities of the American idiom, it was only in his hands that we get a rich style with simplicity and informality of phrases, bold and incongruous simplicity and flavoured colloquialisms. "In his hands comic jargon and dialect became a finished literary weapon, unemphatic. visual, and deceptively simple, sounding like speech and yet not quite the same. Howells said that Orthodox English as written by the accepted masters 'is scholarly and conscious; it knows who its grandfather was'. With Mark Twain *content*—like Western life—had a mongrel incongruity: but *form* began the lineage that has led to Hemingway."* His basic reliance on colloquial idiom encouraged many latter writters who, but for his example would not have dared to deviate from the 'literary' style of his contemporaries.

As a thinker Mark Twain is rather disappointing. He was full of prejudices and in his likes and his dislikess he tended to be irrational. He had minor artistic lapses too, for he was seldom a disciplined writer. But these faults fade into insignificance when compared with the overwhelming greatness of Mark Twain, the buoyant story-teller, the delineator of character and the master of idiomatic prose. Optimist and pessimist, dupe of his own emotions, or coerced by his audience, Mark Twain does not appear to the American reader as a man of letters imprisoned by the demands of his vocation, but rather as a free spirit to whom one turns in order to breathe the virile, joyous, healthy atmosphere of an American. He survives as the evocator of a unique phase of American experience. There is an understanding between him and his public, just as there was during his life time. He continues to have an almost seductive charm for his readers. The reasons for his success are sentimental ; America sees him with real affection, as the first of her writers to draw from the American soil, the material for an original and lasting work."

Other Features of Mark Twain's Art as a Novelist

Mark Twain is a visionary. He excells all the characters he created. He is a born idealist ; imagination urges him to action, reflection and observation. He is sentimental too. He is a sincere artist. He describes without decorations. He sees the desert as dry and depressing. He is a rebel against imposed attitudes. He is a satirist too. His novels have an element of passion. He had a natural talent, a grasping mind and an attentive memory. He told his tales very pleasantly.

Q. 75. Huck in "Huckleberry Finn" says that it is necessary for everybody to feel right and kind towards the other. How far is this remark central to the social criticism implied in the novel ?

Ans. Mark Twain the humorist is sometimes apt to eclipse

* Marcus Cunliffe.

Mark Twain the severe social critic. All his important novels afford along with the humour, a serious, strain. I *The Gilded Age* (1873) Mark Twain satirizes the ruthless individualism and economic evils of the post-civil war period *The Price and the Pauper* (1882) despite its humour is a violent attack against the evils inherent in the system of monarchy. The middle ages come in for a share of Mark Twain's satire in "A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court." The oppression, characteristic of the feudalistic set up, is passionately criticised by him. In his short stories too we find very serious themes that serve as food for serious thought. "The Man that corrupted "Harleyburg" is a study of the effect of greed upon the soul of an entire community." It is not surprising therefore that his most amusing works, *Adventures of Tom Swayer* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* should also have in them serious social criticism. In *Tom Swayer* Mark Twain gives us an idea of the life in his own home town Hannibal, seen through the eyes of the boy Tom. Characters and situations, customs and manners are all exposed and criticised. In 'Huckleberry Finn' the note of social criticism is even louder. This book may be viewed as 'Tom Sawyer's' complement and greater part, though Mark Twain, lacking critical acumen declared the first book superior. This book having an epic quality and picturesque nature is a sharp criticism of American life. It is a book which bears out the truth of Shaw's remark tha Samuel L. Clemens was a sociologist before all else and that the future historian of America would find his work as indispensable to him as a French historian finds the political tract of Voltaire. The central idea of Mark Twain's philosophy was that the greatest good was liberty and the greatest evil was slavery. In "Huckleberry Finn" it is the slavery of Negroes in south that comes in for censure whereas elsewhere it is either the slavery of the minions of a monarch or the spiritual slavery of church-goers or the slavery of a corrupt nation in the Gilded Age.

Huckleberry Finn tells the story of the fourteen-year-old boy Huck who grows up as an outcast in the pre-civil war South, in much-envied freedom. We meet this interesting boy in 'Tom Swayer.' The novel concludes with Tom and Huck becoming rich by discovering some robber's cache. In *Huckebleberry Finn* we see Huck as adopted by widow Douglas and her sister Miss Watson who keeps 'pcking' at Huck. The transition from lawlessness to all the restraints that civilization and sophistication impose upon him is too much for Huck. At this juncture his good-for-nothing father turns up and takes him along. The ease and liberty of such a life appea s to Huck t ll one day his father in a drunken fit seeks to take his (Huck's) life. The boy runs away and hides himself on Jackson Island where he meets Jim the runaway Nigger. This marks the beginning of an enduring bond between Huck and Jim. Together they sail down the Mississippi on a raft hoping to reach Cairo where Jim could be free. Their voyage down the river

turns out to be full of varied experiences and adventures, one of which is Huck's stay on a plantation owned by Grangerford family. There he witnesses a fierce and bloody family fued. Fortunately he is reunited with Jim from whom he was for a while separated. Together they resume their life on the raft and 'head for the big water' Further trouble comes to them in the the shape of 'the late Dauphin' and 'the Duke of Bridgewater' two scoundrels who assume these noble title to exploit the credulousness of the Negro and the boy Huck. Actually they are scamps who have been hounded out, one for selling to the people a substance that was meant to take tartar off the teeth, and removed the enamel too, in the process and the other for conducting a temperance revival while drinking on the sly. It does not take long for Huck to realise that he has got two first-rate rogues on board his raft. 'The Dauphin' and the Duke then plan to make money, play acting in the same town near the river. But the 'Dauphin's Juliet and the Duke's Romeo failed to arouse the enthusiastic appreciation of the audience Back on the raft they plot mischief and to Huck's dismay he learns one day that Jim has been turned in by an old fellow with a beard for forty dollars. Huck sets out in search of Jim and heads for the 'Phelps' place where Jim has been taken. There he is mistaken to be Tom Sawyer and Huck finds it easy to play this role to an unsuspecting Aunt Sally and Uncle Silas. Tom soon arrives and poses as Sid. The two boys plan the rescue of Jim and Tom Sawyer works out the whole project with the strictest adherence to all the details that he has read in books where the escapes of prisoners are described After a risky escapade which gets for Tom a bullet in his leg, Tom reveals the secret that Jim is actually a free man Everybody is happy now except Huck who keeps worrying about his father's coming to claim him once more. Jim reassures him that this will never happen as Huck's father is dead. Aunt Sally then proposes to adopt Huck, but Huck has far other intentions. "I reckon I'll light out for Injun territory ahead of the rest' Aunt Sally, she wants to adopt me and civilise me, and I can't stand it."

Huck's life we find is a constant runing away. He runs away from St. Petersburg in order to ecape from the ill-treatment of his father and also from the inconvenience of being civilized. This flight is by no means his last. We see that at the end of every episode in the novel Huck has to flee. He has to run away from Jackson Island with Jim as the slave-hunters are a menace ; from the wrecked steam boat 'Walter Scott' from a band of robbers and murderers, from Grangerford plantation he is forced to escape because of the violence and blood-shed that are features of the feud. And finally he runs away from the danger of being adopted by the well-meaning Aunt Sally. The fact that this free, sincere and good soul is unable to find moorings anywhere is in itself evidence of the unworthiness of the American life as Mark Twain

saw it. Throughout the novel we find Huck the outcast coming into conflict with society and on every such confrontation we find Huck's natural goodness triumphing over the vices of society. Huck's stand regarding the runaway nigger Jim may be taken as a good example. Having no philosophy or creed to fall back on Hack relies on impulse in a crisis. His sympathies go out of Jim as soon as he meets him on Jackson and he promises to help him to run away to Cairo. When he thinks that Jim has come at last very near liberty he feels qualms of conscience, realising for the first time that he is actually helping a slave to get away. We s e at this point a conflict between Huck's native goodness and humanity and the vices of society. a conflict very much like that pictured by D. H Lawrence in his fine poem "The Snake". Huck decides to hand over him to the white people. But his meeting with the two men in a skiff looking for a run-away nigger alters his decision. He lies cleverly and promptly and thus saves Jim. The ordeal that Huck has to face when questioned by the two men is described thus : "I didn't answer up prompt. I tried to, but the words wouldn't come. I tried for a second or two, to brace up and out with it but I wasn't man enough—hadn't the spunk of a rabbit." Quickly his lies come, averting the danger. The men row away dreading the terrible disease small pox which Huck says 'pap' has. Jim is saved. Thus he repudiates what little society has given him. Relying on his feeling he proceeds always exhibiting his habit of what W. H. Aud n calls moral improvisation. Believing that everyone should feel right and kind towards others, Huck himself sets the "feel ng right' is his trust in Providence. Huck's faith knows none of tne theological props. It is a simple, naive trust. This is what he says :

"I went right, along not fixing up any particular plan, but just trusting to Providence to put the right words in my mouth when the time came ; for I'd noticed that Providence always did put the right words in my mouth."

Huck's uneasiness at times is caused by the ideas that have been put into his young mind by the corrupt society of the slave-ho ding south. These ideas make him feel that what he is doing is wrong. But his own innate goodness makes it impossible for him to act in any other way. "People would call me a low Abolitionist and despise me for keeping mum, but that don't make no difference, I ain't going to tell........." Thus Huck makes his choice, revealing the stuff that he is made of. This choice makes him an outlaw, and plant the feeling of guilt on to his conscience. But this goes when Husck resolves the matter in mind and arrives at the conclusion intuitively that by remaining loyal to Jim he is doing the right thing.

This boy "with a sound heart and a deformed conscience" as his creator called him is meant to be a foil to society with its numerous laws and established institutions. In the house of widow

Douglas Huck chafes under the restraints imposed upon him. His soul that is tuned to Nature, longs for the freedom that can be achieved only by running away. Though Huck cannot say it, he wants to lead a life out in the open, in harmony with the elements of nature, the wind and the stars, the river and the woods. He tells us, ".t's lovely to live on a raft We had the sky up there, all speckled with stars, and we used to lay on our backs and look up at them and discuss about whether they were made or only just happened. Jim, he allowed they were made, but, I allowed they happened......we used to watch the stars that fell, too, and see them streak down. Jim allowed they'd got spoiled and was hove out of the nest'. This is the life for which Huckleberry Finn has rejected society. This rejection is meant to indicate the worthlessness of a society that utters unctuous remarks, but hunts down a nigger who has run for freedom. The double-standards of society make Huck turn away from it.

Mark Twain gives us in the novel specific representatives of this society. The Kentucky feud marked by violence and bloodshed. the 'late Dauphin' and the Duke of Bridgewater making a fine art of swindling, the blood-thirsty bandits on the wrecked "Walter Scott", these are the specimens of a corrupt society with whom Huck Finn is contrasted. These people all lack a quality that is there in abundance in Huck—charity and "the milk of human kindness". At every stage we find his underlying innocence thrown into bold relief by the duplicity or malice or down right wickedness of others. He takes pity on the 'Dauphin' and 'The Dake' and takes them on his boat. He tries to protect people from harm. This protectiveness embraces not merely Jim, but also the orphaned Wilks girls and even the blood-thirsty thieves on the "Walter Scott" A Jim's character also has its share of nobility. The runaway nigger, when he has tasted sweet liberty still jeopardizes it in order to stand by the wounded boy Tom Sawyer. Hence we feel that he is a fit companion for Huck. As one critic has put it their companionship is a "community of saints". Society seems disgustingly corrupt when set against goodness of heart and innocence. To make this clear Mark Twain makes Huck reject the society which the author has deprived of all moral authority. The book concludes with the words: "I reckon I got to light out for the Territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she's going to adopt me and civilize me I can't stand it. I been there before."

Thus this delightful book for boys is pregnant with social criticism. Its dual nature makes it resemble *Gulliver's Travel*, which innocent on the surface is bitingly satirical on a deeper level.

Q. 76. Discuss the plot and themes of 'Huckleberry Finn'.

Ans. In the words of Brander Matthews, *Huckleberry Finn* was not only one of his "great books" but also the greatest book because here "the creative artist was his truest self, transmuting autobiography into fiction." *Huckleberry Finn* was a gift of Mark Twain's boyhood memories ; it was a reminiscent of his life in Hannibal, Missouri on the bank of the mile-wide Mississippi with its countryside, prairie, and forest. The book was born from his Life on the Mississipi. The book can be divided into three parts The first part runs into the sixteenth chapter and depicts J ss fight from slavery and also Huck's flight from the corrupting influence of Miss Watson and his father. The second part continues into the thrity thrid chapter depciting Huck's entry into the Grangerfords, the swindling and impersonation of the Duke and the Duaphin, and their moral degradition The third part of the story starts with Tom Sawyer's return to the Phelps' farm.

The plot is quite loose. It is developed in the fashion of the picaresque novel. The boy hero Huck leaves his native village for the wider world. There is an interlude of his captivity by his Pap in the woods before Huck slips out upon the river in a canoe He loves the river very much. At the Jackson's Island he meets Jim. Jim has escaped from his owner, Miss Watson, who wanted to sell him out to a slave-trader. 'Jim has the strength of a man, the fidelity of a dog, and the compassionableness of a good-hearted boy. The weather of the lower Mississippi is very pleasant in the summer season. Both of them take further adventure in order to escape from that piace lest they should be caught hold.

In the second part Huck moves with the Grangerfords who are the enemies of the Grangerfords. There he witnesses the elopement of Sophia and Harney and the shooting of thirteen year old Buck Later on he falls in the company of the Duke and the Dauphin who are out to make money by fair or foul means. At last the Dauphin sells out Jim to the phelps for forty dollars.

In the third part on the Phelps' farm, Tom Sawyer reappears, and shares the concern of Huck in freeing Jim. Towords the close of this part, Huck tells them all that he is to "light out for the territory" ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally wanted to civilize him, which he does not want for obvious reasons. Huck was previously with the Widow Douglas and Miss Watson and they had also tried to civilize him, but he was out of his depths there. So he does not want to go back to a life of the same type that will hamper his inner peace and internal growth. 'This is a plausible end to the novel. The novelist allows us to think of what may happen to Huck in his further, unwritten but suggested adventures."

As regards the theme of the novel, the major theme of the novel is compassion in the wake of cruelties practised by people in the novel Pap, the Duke and the Dauphin, Miss Watson, Widow Douglas, and Aunt Sally and her husband all are either cruel or hard to Huck. The theme is stated by Huck himself in Chapter 33 when he says : "Human beings can be awful cruel to one another." Another theme parallel to the theme of compassion is the conflict between romance and realism. This is developed through the contrast between Huck and Tom. Tom is romantic and Huck realistic. To Richard P. Admas, the main theme of the novel is Huck's "growth of a boy into manhood, and his final acceptance of adult moral responsibilities." According to Douglas Grant, the central theme of the novel is Jim's freedom from slavery. But Douglas Grant's thesis is rejected by Alexander J Butryam, who says that Jim's freedom from slavery is not the central theme. Jim is not the hero and it is Huck who is the hero in the novel. The story is narrated by him. He finds the cultured way of life and religion irksome It is to escape the 'sivilizating' efforts of Widow Douglas and the cruelties of his father that he gets away in a raft on the Mississippi river. The central theme of the novel, therefore, is his flight, and hence a passive flight against, from the baneful influence of the civilization. At the close of the novel, he would not like to be civilized by Aunt Sally, and so prefers to go to the raft again along with Jim. Thus, Huck's escape from the civilized society, the Grangerfords and Aunt Sally and Widow Douglas (also Miss Watson), forms the central theme of the novel. The boy-hero has fought the cramping inertia of conventional life and morality to become a whole man, and with the love and company of Jim, he has in him a sense of humanism and responsibility awakened.

The novel may be said to have also the theme of parenthood in which Jim acts as the father Huck. The relationship is also to be seen in the Pap-Huck episode.

In Eric Solomon's opinion the consistent theme of the novel is Huck's search to find his identity through a satisfying family life. Huck is an orphan, whose mother is dead and whose father a drunkard, is shot dead. He is a lonely person searching for a family. Even in his "lies, disguises, the hidden identities, impostors and cheats", Eric Solomon has traced the presence of family theme.

As a matter of fact threads of all these be knit together to weave the theme of the novel.

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Q. 77. Discuss 'Huckleberry Finn' as a picaresque novel.

Or

"Thou h a picare que novel, 'Hucklcderry Finn' has a structural dialectic of its own" Discuss this view in the light of the structural uniqueness of the novel.

Ans. The picaresque novel is a form of fiction dealing with the adventures of rogues and vagabonds. In it, the structure is generally loose and rambling ; there is little plot ; the situations created by the writer are portrayed as episodes occurring at random and often without a logical pattern In it the hero is a picaro, a wanderer from place to place, from job to job and from master to master. The characterization is static. The theme of a picaresque novel is the struggle of an individual against hostile society. The ideal world is replaced by a world of harsh, even exaggerted realism, which in some cases tends to be grotesque. The aim of the picaresque writer is to mix comedy with truth, to shed light on the darker places of this world with the rays of satire. The true picaro is forced to leave home in order to find enough to live on. He therefore criticizes the corrupt society of whose disease he is a symptom.

The pi aresque form came from Spain. The picaresque novels were satires on idealistic characters, virtues, chivarly and knight-errandry. They used to highlight the ugly and the absurd in society, and, by contrast. held to laughter all that for which romances stood. In short they were anti-romantic and realistic. They used to have episodic incidents, and no organic plot. The lack of a coherent plot-structure is discernible in all the fictions of picaresque, making the hero to be on the road and observing society, as most of the picaresque novels did. The rambling journey supplied material for the plot ; for example, Partridge in *Tom Jones*, Sancho Panza in *Don Quixote*, and Humphrey in Smollet's *Humphrey Clincker*.

Huckleberry Finn is a novel belonging to the category of Cervantes' *Don Quixote* ; *Lazarillo De Tormes* ; Fielding's *Tom Jones* ; and Cervantes' *Gil Blas*, Smollet's *Humphrey Clincker*, etc. It has all the qualities of a picaresque novel mentioned in the preceding paragraph.

In *Huckleberry Finn*, Huck, the orphan, who sleeps in the hogshead and shuns the ways of conventionality, and re pectability is the central figure of the novel. He belongs to the lowest class and hates refinement, religion and culture. He is accompanied by his trusted lieutenant Jim, a slave. Both the boys (Huck and Jim) have to run away from society, one to escape slavery, the other the corrupting influ nce of civilization. There is nothing selfish, mean and cruel about Huck Huck is a liar, a thief and like Odysseus forges lies and with the fertility of his brain practises deceptions in the novel. He is a true picaro. He is a true picaro.

The novel has many incidents loosely pinned. There is no org nic unity of the plot. The central consciousness of the plot. The central consciousness of the narrator through which dil.erent aspects of life have been se n is the linking factor.

The novel incorporates the elements of romance and fantasy. There is a denuncia ion of romantic absurdity; there is something nonsensical in Tem Sawyeri h plans introduced earlier and also incorporated lat r to effect Jim's escape. The big splash of the ancient medieval rom inces has been introduced in Tom's plan at the end of the book. The prepar ition of coat of arms for Jim, his carving of joarnal on the rocks brought by Tom and Jim, the anonymous letter informing the Phelps of the cut-throat people, bent on taking awey Jim and the growing of weeds with fear in the darkness are the characteristics of the medieval romances satirized by Twain in the novel. Tom Sawyer is always for the fantastic schemes and plans. Moreover, the wrecked steam-boat "Walter Scott", with three robbers is also a satire on the failure of Walter Scott's romances. The Duke and the Dauphin belonging to the aristocracy and the feudal life of the South have been delineated with a critical insight by the writer.

Thus *Huckleberry Finn* has a number of traits of the picaresque fiction. It is like Italian novella in its realistic spirit and can also be treated as a comic epic in prose. It blends laughter and villainy with the element of epic, the great moving force, the River. According to Sculley Bradley & others, "...Twain's novel also can be called the comic epic in prose : comic, because it employs great strokes of wit and humour and the scourge of laughter—to attack the evils of mankind and the consequent sins of society; epic, because its moving force, the great River, is also a stream in time and in history. bearing its raft of argonauts to various shores where lie the relics, wrecks and hopes of a civilization in transition...In the speech of Huck Finn, Twain fashioned a new literary language in colliquial American seen at its best in the descriptions of the River, where the cadences and the vigour of spoken language are expressed by a great artist with such authority..."

In *Huckleberry Finn*, like other picaresque novels, the purpose of the novelist is not merely to amuse the reader with rough and fumble comedy. but to expose the corruption of society through the suffering of two individuals, and to improve by example. Cruelty and love are the twin themes of *The Huckleberry Finn*. The title of the novel is also like that of a picaresque novel. Lionel Trilling noted that the distinctiveness of *The Huckleberry Finn* as a novel is that though it has adopted the picaresque form, there is remarkable unity of form. According to him. "The form of the book is based on the simplest of all novel-forms, the so called picaresque novel, or novel of the road. which strings its incidents on the line of the hero's travels. But, as Pascal says, "rivers are roads that move," and the movement of the road in

its own mysterious life transmutes the primitive simplicity of the form : the road itself is the greatest character in this novel of the road, and he hero's departures from the river and his retu ns to it compose a subtle and significant pattern. The linear simplicity of the picaresque novel is further modified by the story's having a clear dramatic organization, it has a beginning a middle and an end, and a mounting suspense of interest.

But the novel is not merely a picaresque novel It is "a curious admixture of style and content. It has its points of depature from the strict picaresque mode. It is a work in which the novelist achieves a neat balance of comic, satiric, and pathetic scenes through careful juxtaposition of episodes. Still basically picaresque in architecture, this work nevertheless reveals a consciously devised pattern which his earlier works generally lack.

The work has a structural dialectic of its own. Its events are logically connected by a very pleasant narrative There are different experiences, different persons, different locales of these episodes, each of which can be read independently of others. Yet all of them make up a unique whole which surprises the reader with its oneness of impression. In *The Huckleberry* romance and picaresque have been fused chemically The book has a dialectic structure, that is, it holds the opposites in tension among various thematic contrasts. Love and crue ty, isolation and social involvement, roguery and morality, movement and stragnation, solitude and society, illusion and reality, truth and falsehood are the chief dialectics on which the novel has been structured And this is what makes it different from the traditional picaresque novel. Slavery and freedom on the social level, innocence and experience on the emotional. comic and serious on the tonal, raft and the society on the metaphorical, acceptance and rejection on the moral, love and hatred on the ethical, heart and conscience on the psychologieal honesty and fraud on the behavioural, the white and the black on the racial. horror and peace on the dramatic, romance and realism on the artistic level are the various polarities of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.* The novel has a clearly-marked structural unity which is so much lacking in the traditional picaresque novels.

Q 78. What is an allegroy ? Can 'Huckleberry Finn' be regarded as an allegory ?

Ans. The view that *The Huckleberry Finn* is an allegory was put forward by Lauriate Lane. According to Lauriate Lane, "allegory may be defined simply as the representation of one thing in the form of another." A second definition more germane to literature is that allegory is a process by which the spiritual is embodied in the physical.

Explaining the points of similarity and contrast between Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Huckleberry Finn*, Lauriate has remarked : The main difference between the allegorical novel as we know it today and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is that the latter tends to turn into a novel, in most modern instances we have a novel that tends to turn into an allegory.

In *The Huckleberry Finn*, the soul is an enchanted boat. Of all forms of physical progression, that of drifting down-stream in a boat, or on a raft, is the most passive one. The mind under such conditions is lulled, as Huck's is into the illusion that it has lost all contact with reality and is drifting bodilessly through a world of sleep and of dreams. Thus the nakedness of Huck and Jim when they are alone on the raft becomes a symbol of how they have shocked off the excrescences of the real world, their clothes, and have come as close as possible to the world of the spirit.

No matter how much Huck and Jim try to escape the real world is always drawing them back into it. The real world of the raft invades the world of the raft. Parallel to the pattern of ever increasing engagement of the world of the shore with that of the raft is a pattern which begins with Huck's pretended death, a death which is actual to all the world but Huck and Jim. The symbolic fact of his death accomplished, Huck must find an identity with which he can face the real world. His assumption of various such identities forms a significant pattern. The various marks he assumes, starting with that of a girl, as far removed from the reality as possible, gradually draw back nearer the truth. Huck's final disguise, as Tom Sawyer, is only slightly removed from his real self. When he is about to reveal this real and is instead taken for Tom, Huck almost recognizes the meaning of his journey. For he says to himself, "But if they were joyful it warn't nothing to what I was : for it was like being born again, I was so glad to find out who I was."

The river journey of Huck becomes something drifting and passive ; the 'nakedness' of the two friends becomes a symbol of their shocking off the excrescences of the rea world and their coming as close as possible to the world of the spirit. His journey is not an escape from the real world ; but it is an escape from slavery to freedom.

It is on the twin theme of love and cruelty that the total edifice of the allegorical interpretation of the novel depends. This theme is central to every aspect of the plot and characterization. Human cruelty finds its finest expression in the novel,—it applies to the life of the saintly but hunted Jim, whose case-history personifies all the evils of slavery. Pap's cruelty towards Huck, or the Duke and the Dauphin's cruelty towards Jim (the Dauphin actually sells Jim for forty dollars—forty pieces of silver), and

toward three Wilks girls they attempt to defraud are the examples of hard-hearted and callous cruelty. Then there is another kind of cruelty which is unintentional and is caused by indifference of the normally kind-hearted people. For example, Miss Waston's initial thoughtless desire to sell faithful Jim, the event which starts the entire plot ; the senseless, old feud which kills so many good Grangerfords and Sheperdsons, including the pathetic thir een-year old Buck; and the unthinking, automatic chaining of Jim by kindly Uncle Silas and Aunt Sally (he can preach lofty sermons, and she can weep for "Sid"). Jim stands for love.

Thus the novel can be interpreted as an allegory only in part.

Q. 79. Write a critical appreciation of 'Huckleberry Finn.'

Or

Write about the merits and demerits of 'Huckleberry Finn.'

Ans. 1. Plot Structure

The plot of *The Huckleberry Finn* can be split up in three parts. The first part runs up to the sixteenth chapter and depicts Jim's escape from slavery and also Huck's escape from the corrupting influence of Watson and Pap. The second part continues up to the thirty-third chapter delineating Huck's admittance into the Grangerfords, the charlatanism and impersonation of the Duke and the Dauphin, and their degradation. The third part of the story commences with Tom Sawyer's return to the Phelps' farm. In spite of the picaresque form of the book, the novel has coherence of structure. One major flaw of the structure of the play mentioned by critics such as Eliot and Trilling is the overly elaborate scheme for Jim's escape engineered by Tom Sawyer in the closing section of the story. Van O'Connor finds the end of the novel superfluous.

2. Themes

. The novel has one major theme of love and cruelty. Other sub-themes relate to moral and social criticism of American society, of isolation of an individual, and freedom from slavery. According to Richard P. Adams, the central theme of the novel is Huck's growth of a boy into manhood, and his final acceptance of adult and moral responsibilities. In the opinion of Gilbert M. Rubenstein, the major theme of the novel is compassion. Love can also be one of the themes of *Huckleberry Finn*, for the solution simply is human love, the generally unapplied lesson of the sermon—love between Sophia and Harney, between Huck and Jim, between the black and the white. The central theme of the novel, according to Alexander J. Butryam, is Huck's fight with the corrupting and baneful influence of civilization.

3. Allegory and Symbolism

The Huckleberry Finn has been compared to Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and has been called an allegory. Critics like Gilbert M. Rubenstein, Lauriat Lane and William Van O'Connor have tried to find moral and allegorical implications in *The Huckleberry Finn* Huck's journeys on the raft lead him to freedom; his journeys are symbolic of soul's journey to heaven ; the raft is the symbol of peace. Huck's death is also symbolic. The river Mississippi like the Ganges and the Nile stands for a distinct culture. To quote Trilling, the river represents a deity, a force and moral idea, and Huck is a real devotee of that god. He is aware of the supernatural and the divine powers of the river. He praises the charms of the river, the peace pervading. In his journey through the river, he comes back disgusted from the real world of misery to the peaceful waters and eulogizes the beauties and glories of the river, its power and inscrutable mystery. This river god is generally benign but at times it may become malign too. The fogs created by the river, mysterious echoes, the dangerous sandbars and its swollen waters may cause serious havoc. The charm of the river is because of the man it inculcates goodness in those who appreciate its beauties and the charms.

Huck resembles Hamlet, the architypal character, Odysseus Don Juan, Don Quixote and Faust. He has become a symbolic figure in fiction, says T. S. Eliot. Symbolism further provides to the novel a depth and seriousness.

4. Picaresque Element

The novel *Huckleberry Finn* belongs to the genre of *Don Quixote, Lozarillo de Tormes, Gil Blas, Tom Jones* and *Humphrey Clincker.*

Huckleberry Finn of Mark Twain is a picaresque novel. It portrays the lowly lives of two picaros—Huck and Jim, and also of Huck's father. Huck is an orphan, who sleeps in the hogshead. He hates conventional mode of worship and religion ; he does not into the social sanction for slavery ; he hates civilization. He shuns education, refinement, culture, civilization, religion and respectability. Against the social code, he gives protection to the runaway slave, Jim. Both Huck and Jim are escapists from society, they think to be rotten and corrupt. Huck utters out a lie, puts on guises, tries to deceive others in his flight, but he is gifted with an inventive mind. There is nothing selfish about him. The novel, like the picaresque novels, is realistic in its presentation and criticism of society. It mixes villainy with laughter. It is anti-romantic and episodic in construction, and employs the tongue of the people. It is a grim satire on the ills of society. It recounts the adventures of the two boys, first on the Island and then on the great river.

Yet a critic named Jean Bugliari says that this novel is not a picaresque novel, and that the picaresque is a flaw in Mark Twain's novels.

5. Realism in the Novel

The Huckleberry Finn like his Tom Sawyer and Life on the Mis is sippi is a realistic novel in as much as it deals with Mark Twain's realistic experiences of his own boyhood. The American life in the South, the feudal aristocracy, the brutal deaths and murders, the cheating by the Duke and the Dauphin, the social position of the slaves, and the blind faith of this class in superstitions are some of the truthful and graphic pictures of life painted by Twain in this novel. Even in the use of language (dialects) Mark Twain is realistic.

Maurice Le Breton finds the Huckleberry Finn a panorama of Amercian life in all its variety. Landscapes, men, women, cheats and swindlers, customs and beliefs, manners and physcial features of the inhabitants environs and moral codes are all brought out in this American comic epic written in prose. We see in this book the little Missouri town asleep on the banks of the river, with its houses rising in steps from the level, surrounded by its circle of wooded hills terminating near the mississipi. The descriptions of the landscape, of crops, of animals and other sights are also faithful to life. The book further reflects realistically the Negro life. The cruelty of masters towards their slaves as depicted in the novel is realistic.

6. Humour and Satire

Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn is a great book of humour and satire. The whole of the story is embedded with the jewels of humour and horseply. The two boys, Jim and Huck, are on the flight from the world. They become fast friends. The story contains flashes of humour and satire through lies, deceptions, machinations of plot, prevarications of Huck and Tom, and through the superstitions of primitive Jim.

Humour flows from Falstaffian or Don Quioxte-like events in the book. Tom and company form a party of robbers and under the make belief of getting diamonds attack the rich Arabs who are not the rieh Arabs but the schoolboys. And thus in place of loadfuls of dimonds to be carried on elephant backs, they get only doughnuts and jam, which also they have to drop being chased by schoolboys' masters. Thus their heroic exercise proves like Don Quixote beating at the windmills imagining the windmills to be devils.

Jim himself is a humorous character like Huck. Jim is black with a white heart. He is befooled by Tom when his hat is removed to the branches of the tree, and believes that the devils has given

him the five-centre piece which Tom left in Miss Watson's kitchen as a price of the borrowed candles. He gives a wide circulation to this incident–tells all the niggers that he was bewitched, placed in trance, and made to ride over the whole state. Jim keeps a magic hairbal which has been taken out of the fourth stomach of an ox. This hairball he uses to foretell the future, but all his predictions prove to be false.

Even Pap, a very curious character in the novel presents many occasions of humour and boisterous laughter when he was drunk he was a peasing man. Then there is the verbal humour created out of the diaiectical variety of English used by Mark Twain. For example, Huck's speech to Jim about his father :

> Yo ole father don' know yit what he's a-gawne to do, Sometimes he speche'll go, en den ag'in he spee h'll stay. Do bes' way is to res' easy en let de ole man take his own way. Dey's too angels hoverin' round' about him. One uv'em is white en shiny, ent' other one is black. . . . . . . A body can't tell yit which one gwyne to fetch him at de las.

Similarly a humorous situation can be evinced in the following speech of Jim who thinks that Huck's ghost is on Jackson's island :

> Doan' hurt me–don't! I hain't ever done no harm to a ghos'. I alwus liked dead people, en done all I could for 'em. You go en git in de river ag'in, what you B'longs, en doan' do nuffin to ole Jim' at'uz alwuz yo'fren.

In the Huckleberry Finn there are examples of satire against the romances and the romantic life of the middle ages. Mark Twain satirizes the cheating acts of the high-ups like kings and dukes. The Duke and the King are cheats, twisters, opportunity seekers, and wicked person–persons who attempt to rob people of their money and property by fair or foul means. They have no morality, no code of conduct, and are sheer swindlers. As a satirist Twain does not condemn mankind. His satire embodies serious values of social ethics. To Huck the contemporary civilization appears to be no better than a follow sham. He presents a satirical picture of the towns on the banks of the Mississippi. Organized religions have also been made the subject of satire. Miss Watson and widow Douglas attempt to initiate Huck into some of the forms of conventional religious belief, but he rejects them. In Huck's reaction and rejection we get the implied criticism of the religious values which have a peculiar formalness in practice. Miss Watson's religion encourages double standards of ethics and behaviour.

7. Narration

The narration in the novel is carried on by Huck in the first

person. It has given the book an autobiographical form. Abstinence from comments makes the story serious and convincing. Huck tells of his social being and of his individual self No other technique could have enabled the author to depict both the aspects of Huck's personality. It is through the first person narration that Mark Twain could conveniently depict the most sordid realities of the contemporary social life. What would have been unacceptable to the people as the comments of an adult writer becomes easily palatable through the mouth of a sensitive boy.

8. Style and Use of Dialects

"The publication of Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* in the United States in 1885 and of James Joyce's *Ulysses* in Paris and London in 1922 afford two seminal dates for the historian of modern fiction. In both novels the narrative was a dramatization in language of the working of the central character's consciousness. His vocabulary and syntax reflected his interior process of perception, thought and speech. The technique of vernacular narrative and the stream of consciousness treat language dynamically ; they catch it in the act of being formed, and respect it as offering a unique version both of the consciousness of the hero and of the outlines of the world." Mark Twain's style is remarkable for economy.

Twain used the dialect as a perfect instrument of narration in *The Huckleberry Finn*. He made use of vernacular as a medium of expression marvellously. His language is a sensitive, subtle, and versatile instrument. According to Twain's own note in the Introduction to the novel, to have given a polished language to Tom, Huck, Jim, or Pap would be disastrous to the faithful reproduction of the experience. He chiefly uses the dialect of the Frontier. To quote G. C. Bellamy, Twain's "stylistic excellence arises from simplicity, long rhythms, idiomatic phrases, colloquial ease, vivid vocabulary, and an imaginary, intimate accord with the senses.......Mark Twain's artistic conscience is reflected in his intense care for the exact word and in his ability, usually to give an effect of perfect naturalness and self-consciousness—the art that seems no art......"

Q. 80. Bring out the element of humour and satire in 'The Huckleberry Finn'.

Ans. Please see answer to Question no. 79, Sub-heading no. 6 also see answer to question no. 81.

Q 81. Write a note on the humour of Mark Twain.

Ans. People all over the world love Mark Twain as the

greatest humorist America has produced. San Fransisco bestowed upon Mark T ain the title "the wild humorist of the plains."

Mark Twain's humour though original to a great extent, owed something to the humorous tradition of the West. It descended from the Western and the Frontier humour with its incongruities, and its peculiar brand of fiction known as the tall tale. The narrator of the tall tale used dialect in narrated as well as written versions of the stories. When it was written it was deliberately mis-spelt. "The humorist in short posed as a plain uneducated man. He would make a shot at a Latin tag, but mangle it; he would quote Shakespeare with equally disastrous result Since the joke depended on the reader's knowledge of the correct form of the quotation, the humour was less artless than it seemed." This Western humour best seen in Artemus Ward and Josh Billings prepared the way for Mark Twain; he came up through their ranks. The elements of his humour were all familiar to America before he began to write. Sometimes Mark Twain's witticisms are surprisingly like that of others. He once said : "Let us be thankful for the fools; but for them the rest of us could not succeed."

Even in his lecture Mark Twain was irresistibly funny. Always at the centre of the stage, he knew how to modulate his voice, how to make use of eloquent pauses, how to work out a certain suspense before he uttered the joke that set the audience roaring with laughter. One of the lecture posters of Mark Twain read "Doors open at 7-30. The trouble will begain at 8."

Mark Twain's first important book "The Innocents Abroad' is his humorous travel reports. His short story "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras Country" announced to the world the arrival of a rare humorist. The newspapers engaged Mark Twain to contribute humorous reports of travel in Europe. Mark Twain sent home amusning reports, drawing attention to the shortcomings of the old world. The sheer audacity of it was unprecedented. Mark Twain, thinking highly of his own country and convinced of its superiority, confronted the European scene in the mood of a 'debunker'. He toured through Europe with little reverence and seemed to think that the Arno 'a historical creek' would have to have water pumped into it to become a river. He found the foreign languages a source of amusement and his description of the "awful German language is typical"—"whenever the literary German dives into a sentence, that is the last you are going to see of him till he emerges on the other side of the Atlantic with his verb in his mouth." His fellow-countrymen also get a good amount of derision in the book, as well as in "A Tramp Abroad." "Innocents Abroad" undoubtedly is a new kind of travel book that made Mark Twain a national figure.

The two most popular and delightful books of Mark Twain are "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" and "The Adventure of

Huckleberry Finn." The author, "this divine amateur" as Arnold Bennett called him, whose two great stories "especially magnificent" were inferior as "complete works of art" was a genuine humorist The book "Tom Sawyer" was the result of Mark Twain's desire to picture a real boy instead of another youthful model of all virtues as described by the Sunday school stories for juveniles. Highly autobiographical the book is a fascinating string of witty anecdotes in which the lovable boy Tom figures pre-eminently. The pranks of Tom, that exasperate his aunt Polly, the incident of Tom's whitewashing the fence and of his turning up at church on a Sunday with a beetle in a percussion-cap box and the ensuing chain of events are all ample proof of Mark Twain's grasp of humorous situations.

In *Huckleberry Finn*, which is definitely a far greater book than *Tom Sawyer* the humour is more subtle and less hilarious. Huck is a far deeper character than Tom Sawyer and he has in him something of a philosopher as well. Through his lips Mark Twain affords an irreverent treatment of things and institutions The attempts of widow Douglas and her sister Miss Watson to civilize Huck and Huck's reaction to these attempts are highly amusing The tdesperate attempts made by the pious lady to impress upon the boy the bliss of heaven and how they fall flat are really interesting. Huck's comments on individuals and institutions are really tickling since he author has made use of burlesque exaggerations, and skilful anticlimaxes. *Huckleberry Finn* also abounds in humorous situations. Jim's mistaking Huck for his ghost, the enacting of *Romeo and Juliet* by the Duke and the Dauphin, Aunt Sally greeting Huckleberry Finn as Tom Sawyer and the dramatic entrance of Tom as Sid are all situations that delight any reader. Even in the grim portion of the novel the Grangerfords and the Shepherdson's fued we find Mark Twain's typical humour. Huck, under the assumed name of George Jackson describes to Grangerfords the tragedy that has overcome his imaginary family. His pathetic tale touches them. "So they said I could have a home there as long as I wanted it. Then it was most daylight and everybody went to bed and I went to bed with Buck and when I waked up in the morning dart it all I had forgot what my name was. So I laid there about an hour trying to think, and when Buck waked up I says,

"Can you spell Buck ?"
"Yes," he says.
"I bet you can't spell my name", says I.
"I bet you what you dare I can", says he.
"All right" says I "go ahead".
G—e—o—r—g—e J—a—x—on—there now he says."

In the last chapters of *Huckleberry Finn* where Huck and Tom plan the elaborate scheme for the rescue of Jim, we have a

kind of horse-play that is not in keeping with the loftier tone of the novel. Here we find that Mark Twain's fondness for broad humour like his fondness for pedantry leads him into artistic lapses. Throughout the novel we have examples of Mark Twain's humour becoming keen-edged satire. The two scoundrels parading as Duke and Dauphin, the Grengerfords and Shepherdsons lusting for human blood the whites on the trial of a runa-way nigger are all satirized by Mark Twain. He is a humorist who is also a stern critic of society. In "A Connectcut Yankee at the Court of King Arthur" we get a good illustration of Mark Twain's playful satire. In the figure of the Yankee who set out to make medieval England a "going concern" the book extinguishes the nonsense of knight errantry. In *Huckleberry Finn* which is a combination of a social study of the mid-western frontier. romance of the steam boat days on the river, and serious representation of the problem of slavery, naturally humour and satire are seen in plenty. Mark Twain does not forget to aim a thrust at the cheap versifiers of the time in the figure of Miss Emmeline Grangerford whose poem on "Stephen Dowling Bots that fell down a well and was drowned" impresses Huck Finn while he stays with the Grangerfords. "If Emmeline Grangerford could make poetry like that before she was fourteen, there ain't no telling what she could do by and by. Huck said she could rattle off poetry like nothing. She didn't ever have to stop to think. He said she would slap down a line and if she couldn't find anything to rhyme with it would just scratch it out and slap down another one and go ahead. She wasn't particular. She could write about anything ; you choose to give her to write about just so it was sadful." This is Mark Twain's summing up of the sentimental versifiers whose verse he had read

Mark Twain was one of the few writers who have made the world laugh. Mark Twain deplored the vogue of a "sad false delicacy" as making literature insipid and untrue to life. He once insisted that "to simply amuse the masses would have satisfied my dearest ambition at any time." In "How to tell a story," he shows that he was a highly conscious craftsman in writing the humorous story and in the testing the psychological effectiveness of his literary manner directly on countless audiences simply by watching their faces and their reactions. But Mark Twain had a serious side to his nature. A moralist at heart, he was a man of thought as well as laughter. He insists that his task is not buffoonery but teaching Mark Twain chose burlesque, feeling that the public is to be coaxed and tickled into understanding.

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Q. 82. Discuss the statement that the river is a fundamental element in the structure of "Huckleberry Finn."

Ans. Mark Twain wrote his *Huckleberry Finn* as a mere

sequel to his beloved work *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, and always maintained that it was not quite as good as the first book. But the better judgement of Mark Twain's contemporaries, and of posterity has declared *Huckleberry Finn* the greatest of his books and one of the two or three acknowledged masterpieces of American literature. Hemingway even went to the extent of saying that all American modern literature comes from *Huckleberry Finn.*

Mark Twain began his book as a comic story, but before the book was over, it developed great deal of seriousness and even tragic implications that violate the nature of comedy. In technique and structure and characterisation *Huckleberry Finn* is far ahead of *Tom Sawyer*. Huck's narration of the story in the vernacular is something that has made the book vital and significant. Unlike *Tom Sawyer*, it has a compactness and unity, with a dominant central factor holding the different pieces together. One who peruses the novel feels that the Mississippi river is the central factor, the thread that ties the various parts of the novel holding it together, preventing it from falling to pieces.

The Mississippi, which Mark Twain knew intimately and loved passionately figures in "Tom Sawyer" too. We see how Tom plays truant from school to have a delicious swim in the river just as his creator Samuel Clemens did, as a boy. But the river in this story does not assume such striking dimensions and such vital importance to the very structure of the play as in *Huckleberry Finn*.

There are three major elements in the novel. The most important of these is Huck's flight from the cramping, restraining civilizing" attempts of Miss Watson and the cruelty of his father. This soon becomes something more dynamic as it blends with Jim's flight from the fetters of slavery to the dazzling prospects of freedom. At a certain point very early in the novel Huck's flight and Jim's get interwoven and become one theme, inseparable. The second element in the novel *Huckleberry Finn* is the keen social satire through which Mark Twain exposes the hypocrisy, bloodthirstiness and moral decadence of the various parts of the United States. The places he has chosen are the places that Huck and Jim are likely to stop at while drifting on their raft—the towns along the river. The third major element is the shaping of Huck's character. We see how in all these three elements the Mississipi is an integral part, functioning as something indispensable to each.

The Mississippi aids and effects the escape of Huck and Jim. It dramatizes the disappearance of Huck by providing for an elaborate search made by such eminent personalities as Judge Thatcher and Widow Douglas. The cannon fired over the water, the fierry boat playing to and fro in an attempt to find the dead body of Huck contrast striking with the calm refuge that Huck has sought on Jackson Island that stands out in the middle of the Mississippi river. Later discovering Jim on the island and soon hearing that

there is a search party after them Huck decides to resort to flight down the river. They build a raft and set sail thus beginning a saga of adventure along the river. Throughout the story, the river looms large, befriending the fugitives, abetting them mostly and now and then creating problems as when the fog came and Huck lost sight of Jim, or when the steamboat comes crashing into their raft But always one is made to feel the river as a personage sympathising with the run aways and never entirely hostile. But for expansiveness and the protectiveness of the river Huck and Jim would not have drifted freedom at last.

The second element in the novel, as has already been pointed out is social satire. Here again the river is significant. Mark Twain has taken a cross-section of America and exposed it relentlessly to criticism. The towns along the river are thus brought into the searching flash light of the novelist's satire. The shallowness, the fued that thrives on blood-shed, the lack of charity and good will, the narrow-mindedness that Mark Twain wanted to criticise are all there brought to our notice slowly as the raft of Huck and Jim drifting along the river, stops occasionally. The moral values accepted by the town are contrasted sharply with the native innocence and purity of Huck. Jim too seemed to be drawn as a 'relief' to the towns people, for he is a soul tuned to the harmony of nature symbolized by the flowing river. As a critic of Mark Twain Daniel G Hoffman has pointed out "Jim's powers have their mysterious source in the river, partaking of its inscrutable might. For if the river is a god, Jim is its priest. The river god is indifferent to humanity. He runs on uncontaminated by the evils along the shores, asserting now and then in dominance and power over 'damned human race.' Only when Jim is alone with Huck on the river island or drifting on the current is he so free from the corruption of civilization that he can partake of the river god's dark power. Jim responds on a primitive level to that power through which he can interpret the signs that are older than Christianity." The river affords the idyllic background for the charming comradeship of Jim and Huck which has been called by some enthusiastic critic, 'a community of saints.'

The Mississippi has a hand in shaping the character of Huck. The boy who sets sail with Jim undergoes a number of crisis down the river that transform his personality, making his throw overboard many notions of right and wrong that he has gathered while rubbing shoulders with the 'civilized' people around him. The Mississippi with its wild power and weird charm fascinated the boy. His own soul feels 'at home' on the river and he deems it the height of bliss to be allowed to live a free life out in the bosom of nature with Jim. Some of the finest passages in the book—passages that appear lyrical are Huck's descriptions of the river. "It was a monstrous big river down there-sometimes a mile and haif wide; we run and laid up and hid day times; soon as night was most

gone, we stopped navigating and tied up—nearly always in the water under a towhead; and then cut young cottonwoods and willows, and hid the raft with them Then we set out the lines. Next we slid into the river and had a swim. so as to freshen up and cool off; then we set down on the sandy bottom where the water was about knee-deep, and watched the day light come. Not a sound anywhere—perfectly still—just like the whole world was asleep, only sometimes the bull frogs a-cluttering, may be. The first thing to see, looking away over the water, was a kind of dull line—that was the woods on t' other side; you couldn't make nothing else out; then a pale place in the sky; then mere paleness spreading around; then the river softened up away off and warn't black any more, but gray...Sometimes we'd have that whole river all to ourselves for the longest time... It's lovely to live on a raft. We had the sky up there, all speckled with stars, and we used to lay on our backs and look up at them and discuss about whether they was made or only just happened." The river thus provides the novel with idyllic charm and the book gives us pictures of the river in its various moods, alternating with the scenes depicting the evil of the men who live on its banks.

It would not be quite wrong to say that the Mississippi river is one of the major characters of the novel *Huckleberry Finn*. So dominantly does it figure in the book and so captivating is the portr· it that Mark Twain has given us of it. He has endowed this river with personality, making it vibrant, mysterious, powerful. Enchanted himsel by the Mississippi and the magic of the steamboats, Mark Twain has succeeded in conveying to his readers something of the strange appeal of the river. In "Life on the Mississippi" he describes the river beautifully, in "Huckleberry Finn" the river is an active participant in the events, one of the vital characters. Through this and the other books, Mark Twain has made the Mississippi "a focus of the national mind, as Washington Irving earlier had made the Hudson on a scale incomparably larger and richer than Irving's. Through him the greatest of the American rivers became a dwelling place of light, one of the enchanted countries of the imagination, a world uncolonized hitherto, where the mind had never been at home and where hence forth it was always happy to rest."*

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* Our Literary Heritage, by Van Wyck Brooks Otto L. Bettman.

ROBERT FORST (1875-1963)

Q. 83. Discuss Robert Frost as a poet.

Or

Write an essay on the characteristics of the poetry of Robert Frost

Ans. 1. Introduction

Robert Frost is one of the most popular and most honoured poets of America. He has been called by Robert Graves ' the voice of America." He has received numerous prizes and awards for his outstanding work as a poet. He has received four Pullizer Prizes, the Loines Prize for poetry. the Mark Twain medal, the gold medal of the National Institute of Arts and Letters, the silver medal of the poetry Society of America, and has occupied several University and College chairs. At the inauguration of the Presidential office of John F. Kennedy in 1961, he was the special invitee to recite his patriotic poem, *The Gift Outright*. Even Jawaharlal Nehru had scribbled his famous lines before his death and kept them near his table and Frost's lines "And I have miles to go..." were a constant source of inspiration to Pt. Nehru as they have been to others.

His central themes are men and women, humanity, loneliness, isolation and Nature. He fought against the existing traditions of poetry; he wanted poetry to be as free and natural as love. He illuminated things as common as a woodpile and as uncommon as a prehistoric pebble, as natural as a bird singing in it's leep and as mechanistic as a revolt of factory worker. His poetry touches the heart of his country men and his readers because of the strength of his lyricism, his impulsive utterance, his simple poetic diction, his clarity, his patriotism, his art, his symbolism, his modernity and the importance he gave to man. He is as great a poet of Nature in America as Wordsworth in England. As mentioned by Marcus Cunliffe, "His poetry has cropped out of his farmer's world." He is a liberator of poetry. He found poetry chained in punctuation, capital letters, content, convention, phrase, metre, logic and consistency. He did not like all these restrictions. He liked to accept only the restrictions of form and the poetic impulse and meaning. His poems are also remarkable for their modernity, and modernity to him meant a broad outlook and a realistic approach, a fusion of the metaphysical and the symbolic technique. He knows how to say a great deal in a short space (Mark Van Doren). His simplicity and regional flavour and tone, his classicism mixed with his romanticism, his originality, and his

rich philosophy, and his lyricism are some of the general qualities of his work. Jarrell points out the following qualities of Frost's poetry

(1) Frost's tenderness, sadness and humour, which are adulterated with vanity and a hard complacency.

(2) Forst's sorrowful acceptance of things as they are without his exaggerating them or explaining them away.

(3) His many poems in which there are real people with their real speech and real thoughts and real emotions.

(4) Subtlety and exactness.

(5) A classical understatement and restraint.

Frost truly said of himself, "I am not a regionalist, I am a realmist. I wrote about realms of democracy and realms of the spirit." Can there be a better description of his out put than this ?

2. His Popularity

Robert Frost the poet emerged during the period of transition when America was coming out of the old and entering into the new order. When he grew up there was no commanding poetic voice in America. Whitman though alive was less forcefull and vital than before and Emily Dickinson was not as famous as she deserved to be because she chose to write her poems for posterity rather than for her contemporaries. Frost achieved what has been well-nigh impossible for other writers. Though his development as a poet was slow when his volumes of poetry began to appear yet at last he won fame quickly and earned the respectful admiration the old and the new school alike. His book *North of Boston* was hailed with delight by the two opposing camps of poets and critics one represented by the venerable and old patriarch of American letters William Dean Howells and the other by the rebellious and daringly original exponent of the new poetry Ezra Pound. Howells declared the volume "unaffectedly expressive of rustic New England." He went on to say : "Amidst the often striving and straining of the new poetry, here is the old poetry as young as ever; and new only in extending the bounds of sympathy through the recorded to the unrecorded knowledge of humanity." To the enthusiastic Pound, Frost's poetry afforded a welcome break from the "stilted pseudo-literary language." He felt that Frost's decision to write in the "natural speech of New England" was a happy thing for American poetry. This simultaneous recognition from the two extreme schools of poetic criticism was followed by a boundless stream of honours betowed upon Robert Frost, who has been undoubtedly the most distinguished American poet of the twentieth century. He won four Pulitzer prizes, several other prizes, honours and medals: every new book published by Frost became a major event in the country; and by the middle of the twentieth century the New England poet came to occupy a position

very much like the one that Walt Whitman envisaged for the ideal poet of the future.

3. His Major Poetical Works

Yet Frost had to wait a long time before success attended him. A lover of poetry even as a school boy, Frost however met with discouragement in the form of rejection slips from the American editors. In 1912 Frost took a decisive step, by selling his farm and taking his wife and family to England. There he was encouraged to devote himself to poetry by such eminent British poets as Wilfred W. Gibson, Lascelles Abercrombie and Rupert Brooke. His volume of poetry *A Boy's Will* appeared in England in 1913 and won him immediate recognition. "North of Boston', appearing the next year was recognized as one of the great volumes of th· century and a sign of a mature poetic genius. Soon Frost returned to America to find himself famous in his own country. Settling down on a New Hampshire farm Frost wrote his third volume *Mountain I.terval* (1916). Frost was very much in demand for the next three decades. Amid a series of lectures and reading of poetry he brought out *Selected Poems* (1923) *New Hampshire* (1928) *West Running Brook* and *Collected Poems*. Later volumes were *A Further Range*, *A Witness Tree* (1942) *Steeple Bus'*, *A Masque of Mercy* (1947) and *Collected Poems* (1949). Though Frost has not published any serious literary criticism, he has expressed on several occasions, his views on poetry. 'The Figure A Poem Makes' is his preface written to the enlarged edition of *Collected Poems*. It is an interesting document of Frost's views on poetry, the most remarkable of which is his contention that poetry "begins in delight and ends in wisdom."

4. Clarity & Simplicity

The first thing that strikes a student of Frost's poetry is its clarity. At a time when poets were inclined to show off their erudition, and when poetry was full of esoteric reference, Frost's poetry is clear and specific. Unlike the poems of T. S. Eliot and other modern writers Frost's verse does not puzzle the reader with irreducible ambiguity. Clarity and simplicity in Frost is not to be mistaken as triviality, though there are many who accuse Frost of shallowness of thought. But this is a price that a poet who strives for clarity of expression and freedom from the charge of obscurity always has to pay. Tennyson, the English poet always suffered in comparison to Browning who is difficult to comprehend. In Frost's poems, one often finds layers of meaning. But even if one fails to grasp the deeper significance, he is still satisfied with the surface meaning. W. G. O'Donnel writes about Frost's poetry : "His lucidity is such that he who runs may read; there is always an easily grasped meaning or image for the

reader—some perception of nature, some comment about birches, blueberry patches. or deep woods filling up with snow. Were there nothing in Frost below this superficial level, he would certainly have to be set down as a simple bard with a gift for versifying." But there is something below the superficial level. As the best example of this many be taken the poem "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening". On the surface it tells of a man's temptation to answer the strange call of the woods by getting into it and of his resisting the temptation by thinking of the promise he has to keep.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

The poem is full of deeper meaning. As Louis Untermeyer comments this poem, "one of the most quietly moving of Frost's lyrics uses its superb craftmanship to come to a climax of responsibility : the promises to be kept, the obligations to be fulfilled. Few poems have said so much in so little." It is an interesting allegory of life and death.

5. Universality and Depiction of Rural Life

Frost's poety celebrates the countryside of New Hampshire. But he is not a regional poet. He may begin with geography, but he has the ability to take his poetry into an unmappable country. Though he has used in his poems the familiar landmarks of New Hampshire, he has caught the spirit of all countrysides. Hence the universal appeal of Frost's poetry on New Hampshire. As a critic has put it Frost portrays "a variety of rural New England responses to the human predicament not for purposes of recording local colour, but rather to evoke universal extensions of meaning.

Frost's love of the New England countryside was coupled with his love of the simple rustics. His poems give real characters, live people. The dedication of "North of Boston" speaks of the volume as "this book of people." The tramps, the farmers, the hired men are all according to Frost fit subjects for poetry. His characters are real. There are a great deal of portraits of abnormal people in 'North of Boston'—unbalanced people like the overwrought mother in "Home Burial" who is well on the way to becoming a nervous week because of the death of her child, or the wife in "Fear who unconsciously disguises her desires as obsessions." But the majority of characters are sane and sound, like the farmer Warren and his wife Mary of "The Death of a Hired Man." Through the death of Silas, the hired man who comes to their house to die, Warren and Mary arrive at a greater insight into things. They learn that :

Home is the place where, when you have to go there
They have to take you in...
....
Something you somehow haven't to deserve.

There are the Lorens of "Blueberries" the farther and his brood of young Lorens, who inspite of their poverty are determined not to be poverty-stricken and not to ask anything of anyone, and to live just taking what nature is willing to give. The two neighbours discuss the Lorens thus :

He seems to be thrifty ; and hasn't he need,
With the mouths of all those young Lorens to feed ?
He has brought them all up on wild berries, they say,
"Like birds..."
....
.....................It's a nice way to live.
Just taking what Nature is willing to give,
Not forcing her hand with harrow and plow.

About Frost's depiction of these rustic characters George W. Nitchie writes : "Frost is important because he has demonstrated, by his performance in "North of Boston" and in a substantial scattering of poems since then, how much a poet can accomplish by a sympathetic identification with officially unimportant people, by the ability to hear and retain and reconstruct the sound of speech and by fidelity to a limited concept of experience."

6. Realism

Ezra Pound has also commented on the effectiveness of the portrayal of Frost's characters. "Mr. Frost's people are distinctly real Their speech is real ; he has known them. I don't want much to meet them but I know that they exist, and what is more, that they exist as he portrayed them."

All this makes it obvious that Frost's method was that of realism About realism Frost said : there are two types of realists: there is the one who offers a good deal of dirt with his potato to show that it is a real potato and there is the one who is satisfied with the potato brushed clean. I am inclined to be the second one. To me the thing that art does for life is to clean it, to strip it to form." In poems like "Birches", "The Oven-bird," "The Death of the Hired Man" and "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," Frost achieves remarkable realism, a realism born of ordinary things. The properties he uses are for the most part every-day ones and never exotic. Deutch observes "the poet's senses are awake not to the imagined delights of silken Samarkand and cedared Lebanon but to the seasoned commonplaces of rural experience. He was not like the romantic poets interested in extraordinary and remote things. Almost all his poems deal with familiar native scenes. It is only in exceptional poems like "The

Bearer of Evil Tidings" that the action takes place in the remote Himalayas.

7. Dramatic Quality

A very important feature of Frost's poetry is its dramatic quality. Poems like 'Home Burial', 'Blue Berries', "The Witch of Coos', and 'The Death of the Hired Man' afford the best examples of Frost's genius in writing dramatic poems. In 'Home Burial' we have a man and wife facing a crisis. The wife is almost cracking up under the strain of the grief caused by the death of their child. The feeling of horror that she experiences on seeing the graveyard "so small the window frames the whole of it", and the quickly piled burial mound with the gravel "leaping" in the air, and the stains of mud on the man's shoes is vividly conveyed. Depth of anguish that verges on hysteria is deftly depicted in the words of the woman answering her husband's querry :

> *"Can't a man speak of his own child he's los*
> *"Not you ! Oh, where's my hat ? Oh ! I don't need it!*
> *I must get out of here. I must get air*
> *I don't know rightly whether any man can."*

In 'The Witch of Coos' and 'Paul's Wife' Frost makes dramatic uses of suggestions and understatements, to build up a total effect, which the mere telling of the story could never have achieved.

"The Death of the Hired Man" is the finest example of Frost's use of the dramatic. Like Browning's dramatic monologues, this poem suggests gestures. The scene assumes reality and vividness because of the clever strokes that the poet makes use of. Mary describes the abject figure that Silas cuts on his return to the farm from which he had gone thus :

> *He's worn out. He's asleep boside the stove*
> *When I came up from Rowe's I found him here.*
> *Hudled against the barn door fast asleep,*
> *A miserable sight, and frightening, too—*
> *You needn't smile—I didn't recognize him—*
> *I wasn't looking for him—and he's changed*
> *Wait till you see*

8. His Langnage & Diction

As for Frost's language, it may be said that his poetry says itself. He uses simple words and weaves into verse the actual tones of common speech. His words come from the plain language of every-day talk. Every word counts, every word somehow is made to add to the mood of the poem. In "Mending Walls" there is not only the attitude but the actual tone of the countrymen in lines such as these :

He is all pine and I am apple orchard.
My apple trees will never get across
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.

Out of their context these lines sound as if they have been drawn straight from the countryman's stock of proverbial wisdom. But their fuller meaning strikes us when we read them in their context. Frost did not from the beginnin : show this happy style in his poems The poems in 'A Boy's Will' use language of the genteel poets But in 'North of Boston', the language is really the language spoken in north of Bosten. Before the time of Frost, this language was a mere dialect to be used in ballads or in satires like "Biglow Papers". "But Frost in England has done what Hemingway would latter do in Paris: he has raised his own idiom to the dignity of a literary language." In bringing poetry into harmony with the spoken word, not by adopting the crudeness and vulgarities of common speech but by refining the vernacular without robbing it of its savour. Frost has achieved what Wordsworth aimed at but could not achieve. Frost is perhaps the only poet who satisfied the Wordsworthian theory of poetic diction.

9. His Philosophy

The simplicity of Frost's verse is misleading. It, at times cloaks the depth of his philosophy. He was always a patient and persistent seeker after truth. Neither in politics nor in poetry was he willing to surrender himself and his conviction as he says in "The Black Cottage"

............Why abandon a belief
Merely because it ceases to be true
Cling to it long enough, and not doubt
It will turn true again for so it goes.
Most of the change we think we see in life
Is due to truths being in an out of favour.
As I sit here and often times, I wish
I could be a monarch of a desert land
I could devote and dedicate for ever
To the truths we keep coming back and back to.

But this steady search for truth has not made Frost a grim gloomy philosopher. His touch is light even when his theme is serious and often he is most casual when he is most serious. Wilfred Wilson Gibson, the English poet speaks of "Frost's rich and ripe philosophy that had the body and tang of good draught-cider." "Mending Walls" is one of those poems where Frost makes certain significant observations on human life and conduct. He airs two contradictory opinions regarding the erection of a wall between the compounds of two neighbours. One is :

Something there is that doesn't love a wall

and the other

Good fences make good neighbours.

Louis Untermeyer points out how these opposing statements imply how man cannot live without walls, boundaries, limits and particularly self-limitations and how he yet resents all bonds and is happy at the downfall of any barrier. "Some readers have found far-reaching implications in this poem. They have found that it states one of the greatest problems of our time : whether national walls should be made stronger for our protection, or whether they should be let down, since they cramp our progress toward understanding and eventual brotherhood. Other readers have read 'Mending Wall' as a symbolic poem. In the voices of the two men - the younger whimsical, 'new fashioned' speaker and the old-fashioned farmer who replies with his one determined sentence, his inherited maxim - some readers hear the clash of two forces the spirit of revolt, which challenges tradition and the spirit of restraint, which insists that conventions must be upheld, built up and continually rebuilt, as a matter of principle." The poem 'Birches', one of the most-frequently quoted of Frost's poems, expresses a deep philosophy "a poetic hunger" for withdrawal which might permit swift and exciting return, with grace and without effort, to a new sense of life :

I'd like to get away from earth awhile
....
....
I'd Like to go by climbing a birch tree,
And climb back branches up a snow-white trunk
Towards heaven till the tree could bear no more,
But dipped its top and set me down again
That would be good both going and coming back.

The poet emphasises that this retreat is not to be a permanent one, for he does want very much to be back on this earth for :

Earth's the right place for love :
I don't know where it's likely to go better.

This robust optimism and relish for this world has something of Browning in it Yet it is not always a note of affirmation that one gets in the poetry of Robert Frost. 'North of Boston' often reflects the background of social and economic disturbance, and here Frost has painted some of the bleakest pictures of life to be found in his poetry. The tone of disillusionment and bitter gloom can be found in his poems like 'Home Burial'', "The Fear" "The House Keeper", "The Hill Wife" and "An Old Man's Winter Night". One of the most powerful poems of Frost, "Directive", shows Frost's obsessive themes, those of isolation, of extinction, and the final limitations of man. It ends with the invitation :

Here are your waters and your watering place
Drink and be whole again beyond confusion

As a Poet of Democracy

Like Whitman, Frost was a poet of democracy. Both writers are profoundly interested in brotherhood and fellowship. But they approach the problem differently. Whitman believed in taking, everyone, in a universal embrace. But Frost more realistic than Whitman felt that mere affirmation of universal fellowship was not enough Frost was also taken up with the theme of alienation, of man's isolation from his fellow-man. In 'Mending Walls' the old fashioned farmer refuses to deviate from the assertion "Good fences make good neighbours". One interpretation of the poem is that Frost is urging through this poem that for mutual understanding and respect barriers between man and man are necessary.

Like Whitman. Robert Frost was also patriotic though he expressed his patriotism in more subdued tones than Whitman's loud trumpeting of national sentiments. 'The Gift Outright', one of the best of Frost's smaller poems is according to Randall Jarell "the best patriotic poem ever written about our own country." Ideas of love of one's country and the surrender of the self for the country have seldom been better expressed than in the lines :

Something we were withholding made us weak
Until we found it was ourselves
We were withholding from our land of living,
And forthwith found salvation in surrender.

In politics Frost was for unrestrained laissez faire system if we are to take seriously his words in "Build-soil" :

I'd let things take their course
And then I'd claim the credit for the outcome.

11. A Note of Humour

In the poems "A Masque of Reason" and "Masque of Mercy" Frost takes up the question of Man's relation to God. "A Masque of Reason" is an attempt made by the poet to justify the ways of God to man. The poem is satirical in its shrewd observation on human fallibility, man's stubbornness and lack of understanding. The theme of the poem is that understanding is dependent not only upon reason, but upon faith as well, a faith which helps the finite mind accept the mystery its reason fails to explain adequately. To those who say that there is no depth in the poetry of Robert Frost may be quoted the words of Lionell Trilling uttered in the course of his speech on Robert Frost delivered on his birthday : "when I began to speak I called your birthday Sophoclean and that word has, I think controlled everything I have said about you. Like you Sophocles lived to a great age, writing well and like you, Sophocles was the poet his people loved most Surely they loved him in some part because he praised their common country. But I think that they loved him chiefly because he made plain to

them the terrible things of human life; they felt perhaps, that only a poet who could make plain the terrible things could possibly give them comfort." But this philosopher was not always grave for many of his poems are full of drollery and whimsical humour. Even in poems where people argue and quarrel, we got a healing humour.

His Shortcomings

Frost is an unequal poet, that is, some of his poems very good others are not so good. His didacticism becomes too obtrusive and offensive. His range of characterization is limited to rural New Englanders. Some of his views are shallow and conservative. He displays Victorian purdery in matters of sex. His philosophy lacks depth and profundity. In the words of Yvor Winters, "He is a spiritual drifter." Many a time he is comic and ridiculous. He relies too much on instinct and impulse. He constantly compares man to animals and trees, and this belittles his position.

What Frost's critics have to say about him is that he is a bit slow and that he is poet of the here and now, and that the past seldom enters into his work. Some point out that Frost's Yankee manner unsuccessfully employed results in "cold flatness, prosaic lines, extrinsic moralising, faulty ellipses and obscurity." But these charges if valid, dwindle into insignificance when placed side by side with the positive merits of the poet to whom it was both a vocation and an avocation to compose poems.

Q. 84. Do you think Robert Frost deserves to be called a modern poet ?

Ans. By modernity is not meant contemporaraneity. A work does not become 'modern' merely because it has been published in the last year or two, or since the beginning of the century. "Modernity" therefore should not be judged on the basis of historical perspective. A work can be called modern only if it has certain characteristics such as an awareness and knowledge and reflection of contemporary social, and scientific developments, a sensibility to contemporary phenomena like machinery, the industrial city and neurotic behaviour, the liveliness that comes from topicality, the difficulty that comes from intellectual abstruseness, blend of thought and emotion, crazing to blend all kinds of realities, a mistiness or mystic and symbolic overtures, involvement with the mind or soul of the individual, preference to individual instead of importance to society, originality, love of convention but a desire to break convention, paradox and antithesis, moribund attitude, etc. These are some of the features of modern literature. No one writer can catch up with all these

features. If some of them are shared by a writer, a writer becomes modern.

There are critics such as Isidor Schneider, William Van O'Connor, Cranville Hicks and Yvor Winters who say that considered in the light of above-mentioned definition of modernity, Frost is not essentially a modern poet. Some others do not regard him as a modern poet because of his pastoralism and agrarian outlook. He is, moreover, not a poet of barren lands. The civilization, in which he lived and wrote, might be in a state of progressive degradation, might be stale and sterile, dry and drab, dark and dismal, surroanded by a 'miserable generation of enlightened men', but Frost has nothing to do with it. Themes likes Hollow Men, Gerontion, Look Back in Anger, Age of Anxiety or even The Was'e Land are just outside his range. He is not out to lament over the 'spiritual split milk', nor does he show his wounds, his laziness, his boredom and ennul living in this 'dedicated work a-day century'. It is none of his business to lower literature to "the boredom implicit in sensuality," "the consciousness of neurosis," the feeling of "damnation on this earth." He is essentially a poet of pastures and plains, mountains and rivers, woods and gardens, groves and bowers, fruits and flowers, seeds and birds.

That is the reason perhaps Schneider wrote, "Mr. Frost is singularly out of touch with his own time...We may go, therefore, to his poetry for diversion and relief from our time, but not for illumination." O'Connor says that Frost's poetry wants tensions and conflicts born out of the incessant growth of machines, industries and skyscrapers.

Yet there are other critics such as Cleanth Brooks, Lionel Trilling and John F. Lynen who consider Frost to be a modern poet. Cleanth Brooks says, "Frost's best poetry exhibits the structure of symbolist metaphysical poetry, much more clearly, than does of many a modern poet." Frost portrays the disintegration of values in modern life and the disillusionment of the modern man. Most of his poems deal with persons suffering from loneliness and frustration, loss and disease of modern life. For example, in *The Hill Wife*, he deals with the sense of isolation and fear and marital estrangement of an isolated woman. The poem is subtly suggestive and psychologically developed. And *Home Burial* portrays the disharmony prevailing in the modern world. In *An Old Man's Winter Night*, the man is lonely and old:

> *A light he was to no one but himself*
> *Where now he sat, concerned with he knew what,*
> *A quiet light, and then not even that.*

Modern man's disillusionment, frustration, gloom, isolation and loneliness are reflected in the following lines

No, from the time when one is sick to death,
One is alone, and he dies more alone
Friends make pretence of following to the grave,
But before one is in it, their minds are turned
And making the best of their way back to life
And living people, and things they understand.

Frost also anticipates symbolism and imagism in his poetry. In his descriptions he is a realist like other modern writers. His love of nature is an indidcation that modern man has gone far away from Nature and his own nature; his slavation lies only in taking a refuge to nature. People of his poems are all modern human beings. The Symbolist verse of Pound, Eliot and Yeats "represents the dominant mode of modern poetry." Considered in the light of the Symbolist technique. Frost is a modern poet. In the words of Lynen, "He is not only a poet of the twentieth century but one who, in his own way, deals with the very problem which is the concern of the Symbolisms" Frost is opposed to Romantic tendencies; in this respect too he is modern. Frost's pastoralism is not a barrier to his modernity. "In his pastorals, Frost's dominant motive is to reassert the value of individual perception against the fragmenting of experience resulting from modern technology. They thus deal with one of the most fundamental concerns of twentieth-century thought." (John F. Lynen.)

Frost's poetry may not have a modern style which one finds in poets like Eliot, Pound, Yeats, Auden, and Cummings, yet it is the poety that never pretends; it is the poetry of good conversation and plain style. In it we have a curious mixture of the humorous and the serious, of the attractive and the terrible. His poetry sums up the past and enlivens the present for a happy, wise future. It transcends time and space. It is universal in its appeal. It is powerful enough to express both things and thoughts. It is symbolic. It plays on the modern technique of contrasts and suggestions. Much in his thought he owes to modern thinkers, especially the Transcendentalists of America like Emerson. His use of the pastoral form in poetry was not an escape from reality but an advantage to study man in relation to Nature and Natural laws. Even his concern for modernity can be viewed from the following lines of *The Egg and the Machine* :—

Il there was one egg in it there were nine,
Torpedo-like, with shell of gritty leather
All packed in sand to wait the trump together,
'You'd better not disturb me any more',
He told the distance, I'm armed for war
The next machine that has the power to pass
Will get this plasm in its goggle-glass.

If Frost has written poetry without punctuation, without capital letter, without any specific considerations for being an imagist, without epigram, it does not mean that he is not a modern poet, He is a modern poet because of his voicing the cocern for the modern man, for his anxiety to save the modern from going in ditch deep into the pit of ruin.

Q. 85. Discuss Robert Frost as a poet of Nature.

Answer.

A Unique Poet of Nature

Keats and W H. Davies and the great Pre-Raphaelite poets merely observed and recorded the beauties of Nature : for them a thing of beauty was a joy for ever, and Nature was a fountain of Beauty. Some others like Shelley, Whitman and Dos Passos stood on a height to observe the panorama of Nature and Society together. Still some others like Wordsworth and Hardy spiritualized or personified Nature ; to them Nature spoke a significant language and stirred within them profound philosophical reflections. In this group can also be placed writers like Poe, Melville and Henry James. But Frost's approach to Nature was a fusion of all these Sometimes he simply observed and recorded beauties of Nature ; at times he found spiritual echoes in it, still at some other times he found Nature a mirror of man's soul. But he never saw Nature away from Nature That is why he said, "I guess I'm not a nature poet. I have written two poems without a human being in them." As Nitchie has pointed out, "Frost is ultimately not very much concerned with developing a philosophically consistent concept of nature......what really interests him is not definitions but attitudes, not what nature is in itself but how man responds to it in a world he never made."

Frost's attitude to nature has nothing of the excited delight with which a city-dweller views nature on an occasional escapade into the country. Deutch, Frost's critic, remarks that he does not see the country with the eyes of the carefree vagabond or the city-sick romantic who finds it as charming and refreshing as a new mistress He has for it rather the understanding, slightly quizzical look a man gives the wife of his bosom.

"It is no spirit of nature which sends Frost's rain or wind ; he never sees in the natural world the pervading spirit Wordsworth saw...the mountain is not a personality as it is for Wordsworth in *The Prelude* and in other poems." (Marion Montgomery). Frost did not idealize or glorify the objects of nature. He saw them as things with which and on which man acts in the course of the daily work of gaining a livelihood. He rarely makes his lessons or his philosophy of nature as overt and obvious as Wordsworth some-

times did. His attitude towards nature is realistic rather than romantic Nevertheless, he has Wordsworthian simplicity of style in his descriptions of Nature.

Minute, Accurate and Lively Descriptions of Nature

The descriptive power of Mr Frost," says Isidor Schneider, "is to me the most wonderful thing in his poetry. A snowfall, a spring thaw, a bending tree, a valley mist, a brook, these are brought into the experience of the reader." Robert Frost is pre-eminently the poet of the New England countryside. His poems are actually New England eclogues. New Hampshire was to Frost what the Lake District was to Wordsworth. He evinces an intense knowledge of this region Northwest and Northward of Boston. Not since Thoreau had any one responded so sensitively to the particularities of a rural landscape. The poems abound in lovely pictures, and "the reader finds himself in a delightful world of wooded valleys and wooded hills where he can hear the blue jays screech and the whimper of hawks beside the sun ; he comes upon the purple-stemmed wild raspberry, the sodden pasture lane of late fall, and the abandoned cellar holes gradually being reclaimed by nature." (Cowley)

Pastoral Element

Critics like Alvarez deny Frost the title of "nature-poet" and would regard him as rural or country-poet Undoubtedly Robert Frost's poetry has an agrarian bias ; it is the poetry of a countryman for the countrymen "He is a country poet, whose business is to love with nature rather than through it." (Alvarez). He wishes to carry us off to the agrarian world from the choking modern city. He is essentially a poet of pastures and plains, mountains and rivers, woods and gardens, groves and bowers, fruits and flowers, seeds and birds. To him "Wood are lovely, dark and deep" ; "Leaves are all my darker mood", and

> I have wished a bird would fly away,
> And not sing by my house all day ;— (*A Minor Bird*)

and

> Earth's the right place for love :
> I don't know where it's likely to go better.
> I'd like to go by climbing a birch tree,
> And climb black branches up a snow-white trunk
> Toward heaven, till the tree could bear no more,
> But dipped its top and set me down again.
>
> —*Birches*

A Great Lover of Nature

Frost is no small lover of nature. His love for nature is primarily owing to his temperament, and secondarily to his background. He was a farmer and a poet. Nature had been his constant companion since his youth as it had been with Words-

worth. And, throughout his life he moved in it. Whereas most Romantic poets loved Nature for its own sake, for its colours, and went to it with a bumping heart, as thought caught by it. Frost looked at Nature as a realist and a classicist.

Frost had an eye for all lovely things of nature, great and small. His keen perception made him see things that escaped the notice of others and he described them lovingly. About blue berries he wrote :

"You ought to have seen how it looked in the rain,
The fruit mixed with water in layers of leaves,
Like two kinds of jewels, a vision for thieves."

He describes the bent bough of birches with exquisite charm :

Often you must have seen them
Loaded with ice a sunny winter morning
After a rain. They click upon themselves
As the breeze rises and turn many-colored
As the stir cracks and crazes their enamel.
Soon the sun's warmth makes them shed crystal shells
shattering and avalanching on the snow-crust —
Such heaps of broken glass to seep away
You'd think the inner dome of heaven had fallen.
They are dragged to the withered bracken by the load
And they seem not to break ; though once they are bowed
So low for long, they never right themselves :
You may see their trunks arching in the woods
Years afterwards, trailing their leaves on the ground
Like girls on hand and knees that throw their hairs
Before them over their heads to dry in sun.
So was I once myself a swinger of birches.
And so I dream of going back to be.
It's when I'am weary of considerations.
And life is too much like a pathless wood
Where your face burns and tickles with the cobwebs
Broken across it, and one eye is weeping
From a twig's having lashed across it open
I'd like to get away from earth awhile
And then come back to it and begin over.

These are the lines from his famous poem "Birches" a fine example of Frost's descriptive power. He has given a simple, concrete description of the habits of birches and changes wrought upon them by wind and ice storms He describes the objects of nature vividly and forcefully. His poems give evidence of his capacity for minute observation and accurate description. Some of the most interesting poems of Frost in which nature predominates are : *Birches, Mowing, The Oven Bird, West-Running Brook, Snow,*

Stopping by Woods, The Tuft of Flowers, A Minor Bird, The Tree at my Window, etc.

Frost sees both the good and evil sides of Nature. The malevolent aspect of nature is touched rarely. In *Our Hold on the Planet*, he writes that though much in nature is against us, yet man has an advantage :

> *We may doubt the just proportion of good and ill*
> *There is much in nature against us. But we forget :*
> *Take nature altogether since time began,*
> *Including human nature, in peace and war,*
> *And it must be a little more in favor of man.*

Bur Frost makes clear : "I wouldn't be a prude afraid of nature" and says "Nothing not built with hand of course is sacred." Occasional moods of despair and gloom over, he often switches to the mood of the sunny side of Nature. Poems such as *The Soldier, The Riders, Brown's Descent, The Lost Follower, The Courage to be New*, and *To a Moth Seen in Winter* establish man's heroism over external forces. But at the same time poems such as *An Old Man's Winter Night, The Black Cottage, The Hill Wife, Snow, The Home Burial, The Fear* and *A Servant of Servants* reflect his gloomy moods and loneliness.

It is significant to note that the descriptions of nature in his poetry are an integral part of the major theme of his poems. His descriptions are warranted by the situations the poem purports to enact, and are not thrust on it Even in his most illustrious nature poems like *Blueberries, The Wood Pile, Birches*, etc. the main interest is in the people who talk, and references to nature, have only a marginal function to perform.

Yet a few of his poems like *The Sound of Trees, Of the Stones of the Place*, etc. refer to nature directly. Direct references to nature are really very charming. For example see the following lines :

1 *Lord I have loved your sky,*
Be it said against or for me,
Have loved it clear and high,
Or low and stormy.

2. *I wonder about the trees.*
Why do we wish to bear
Forever the noise of these
More than another noise
So close to our dwelling place ?

—*The Sound of Trees*

3. *I farm a pasture where the boulder lies*
As touching as a basket full of eggs.
And though they are nothing anybody begs

I wonder if it wouldn't signify
For me to send you one out where you live.

Frost unlike Wordsworth is no nature mystic. This point is clarified by W. H. Auden. " Frost's poems on natural objects are always concerned with them not as foci for mystical meditation or as starting points for fantasy but as things with which and on which man acts in the course of the daily work gaining a livelihood. Herein lies the difference between Wordsworth and Frost. Unlike Wordsworth, Frost does not spiritualize nature—Wordsworth quite explicitly does and Frost does not perceive an organic relation-ship, vital continui y between man nature." A comparison between 'Tintern Abbey' and the poems of Frost illustrates this idea. Wordsworth's rapture in the midst of nature was the result of his faith in nature's divine aspect. Frost lacking this faith could experience only a joy.

So Nature has little didactic appeal to Frost. It is never an impulse from a vernal wood that may teach of men more than all the sages can. "His best poetry is concerned with the drama of man in nature, whereas Wordsworth is generally best when emotionally displaying the panorama of the natural world." His poems tell us, not so much of rare exalted chosen moments, of fleeting inexplicable intuitions, but of his daily and common experience.

———

Q. 86. Discuss Robert Frost as a lyric poet.

Ans. Robert Frost is the American Shelley. He exhales verse as naturally and spontaneously as a flower exhales fragrance. His poems have all the major characteristics of a lyric : subjectivity, brevity, melodious and musical appeal, sweet and sonorous diction, rich imagination, deep emotional note, restlessness of the heart of soul. H s lyrics are also remarkable for his impeccable ear for the rhythms of speech; his realistic handling of nature that transcends the ordinary "love" we ascribe to poets of the outdoors; his revelation of human character by means of dramatic events; his warm philosophy that combines a whimsical poet with a dirt framer whose feet are not only planted on the ground but in it. Just see the lyric note in the following lines :

1. *Far in the pillared dark*
   Thrust music went—
   Almost like a call to come in
   To the dark and lament

2. *I have stood still and stopped the sound of feet*
   When far away an interrupted cry
   Came over houses from another street,
   But not to call me back or say good-bye

3. *Some say the world will end in fire,*
Some say in ice.
From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire.
But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction ice
I also great
And would suffice.

And can anyone forget the lyricism of these lines ?—

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

Frost has written both kinds of lyrics—the shorter ones, and the longer ones. The shorter lyrics are more popular and appeal more than the longer ones. In the words of Dudley Fitts, one is perfectly at home with the short lyrics such as *After-flakes, Lost in Heaven, A Blue Ribbon at Amesbury, Desert Places* etc. Here is Frost at his purest and best; no one else writes in this way, no one else has ever written precisely in this way. The quality is vibrant, eager and curiously young; it is the pure incantation, the more moving because it is managed by the simplest and homeliest means.

His finest and most beautiful lyrics as mentioned by Rolfe Humphries are : *Reluctance in a Boy's Will, The Road Not Taken, The Sound of the Trees in Mountain Interval; Fire and Ice, In a Disused Graveyard, Stopping by Woods, Bereft, Acquainted with the Night in West Running Brook, Come In, A Nature Note*, etc.

To sum up, Frost is primarily a lyric poet. His lyrics uniquely combine the lyric and the dramatic together. "When his work is viewed as a whole, it will be seen that he never left the lyric for long." (Louis Untermeyer . "Frost is at his best and purest in the lyrics." (Dudley Fitts). To quote Lawrence Thompson, "His primary artistic achievement rests on his blending of thought and emotion and symbolic imagery within the confines of the lyric." Thompson further writes : "He is primarily a subjective lyric poet, at his best in his apparently contradictory moods of response to experience and in his figurative ways of defining difference." And Untermeyer observes : "Frost's lyrics range from the facetious to philosophic; often the two extremes are combined. Mostly, however, they begin with a simple idea and hoax the reader, almost without his awareness, to extend the implication of the idea far beyond its plain presentation."

The blend and fusion of the lyric, the dramatic, the symbolic, the philosophic, of thought and emotion is best exemplified by the following lines from *Moon Compasses* :—

I stole forth dimly in the dripping pause
Between two downpours to see what there was.
And a masked moon had spread down compass rays
To a cone mountain in the midnight haze,
As if the final estimate were hers,
And as it measured in her callipers,
The mountain stood exalted in its place.
So love will take between the hands a face.

Q. 87. Discuss Frost as a poet of democracy.

Ans. For answer please see Answer to Question No. 83; Sub-heading No. 5 and 10.

Q. 88. Discuss Frost as a philosophical poet.

Ans. For answer please see Answer to Question No 83, Sub-heading No. 9.

Q. 89. Frost once defined poetry as "saying one thing and meaning another." Discuss this idea with reference to the poems you have read.

Ans. The delights of poetry are manifold. The melody of words, the lyrical rapture, the felicity of expression, the surprising newness of thought, the richness of imagery are all things that satisfy the lover of poetry. But as Sir Philip Sidney pointed out long ago, poets are teachers also, and a good poem is edifying even as it is joy giving. Good poetry gives, in the words of Gray "thoughts that breathe, and words that burn." In some poems we find didacticism of an obvious type whereas in others, the moral dose of wisdom is veiled and delicately clothed. Robert Frost's poems belong to the second category. He is not a poet who preaches and denounces loudly. He is a poet who has found themes for poetry in the ordinary everyday things and incidents of rural life. But in these poems one detects a note of wisdom, a gentle beckoning to the reader to come and drink from the waters and watering place of great poetry and utter lucidity of Frost have served to hide the depth of his poetry. His verse is like clear water in a stream that by its very clarity gives a wrong impression of shallowness. But a study of Frost's poetry reveals the fact that he has got very serious messages to convey to the stricken world of today but being a great poet, he does not make these messages direct or too obvious The language and method of Frost show the indirectness that is there in all great poetry. After all the great teachers taught wisdom to the world in parables with the admonition : "He that hath ears, let him hear."

Robert Frost delighted in this method of imparting his message. He once said that if he had to be classified he would call himself a synecdochist ; "For I am fond of the synecdoche in

poetry, that figure of speech in which we use a part for whole." True to this principle Frost endows his poem with plenty of suggestiveness. His playful way of expression actually holds a key to his poetic method. In his poems what Frost does is to suggest all without telling all. They have moreover different planes of meaning; the obvious meaning, satisfies the ordinary reader, but the more penetrating reader finds universal truth and contemporary relevance even in the simple statements of the poet. As an example may be taken the poem "Mending Wall". It is about the differing attitudes to the same question, held by two neighbours The farmer who speaks feels that a wall is not necessary between him and his neighbour.

There where it is we do not need the wall :
He is all pine and I am apple orchard.
My apple tree will never get across
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.

But the other farmer remains stubbornly convinced that "good fences make good neighbours. "He is poles apart from his neighbour, as he mends the wall "bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top in each hand, like an old stone savage armed." The first farmer reflects about his neighbour :" He moves in darkness, as it seems to met not of woods only and the shade of trees."

Obviously this is a poem about two New England farmers confronting a problem. But looking deeper one finds that the poem states one of the greatest problems of our time. The question of world unity and universal brotherhood has been demanding the attention of grave philosophers and Frost's little poem is a contribution to the discussion held on this subject. He is asking in poetic form the vital question, whether national walls should be made stronger for our protection, or whether they should be let down since they hinder man's progress toward understanding and eventual brotherhood. The poem may also be taken as a fine analogy of the conflict between tradition and the force of impatient revolt.

The same principle of meaning at various levels can be found in Frost's exquisite poem "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening". The poem is in the shape of a rural traveller's soliloquy while he stays briefly to enjoy in spite of cold and loneliness, the haunting beauty of the woodlands in snow His commonsense says to him that he should not stop, but the fascination that the woods exercise over him makes him want to stop. But the rememberance of the promises he has to keep impels him to move on. He remembers just in time, the promises he has to keep. Here, the reader is aware of more than one possible meaning for words such as 'promises', 'miles' and 'sleep'. The experience of the rural traveller then becomes the general experience of any man whose life is spo-

ken of as a journey. Life's journey includes pleasures and hardships, duties and distances. Explaining this analogy in the poem Lawrance Thompson writes : "There is even a slightly tragic implication suggested by the "coldest evening of the year." Yet within this bitter cold occurs an elementary revelation of beauty which lays claim on us as existing nowhere else. Regardless of the dark and cold, we are prone to tarry quite irrationally because of this paradoxically somber excitement and recompense. The reluctance to leave becomes an expression of an endless hunger for holding and making permanent a dark moment of pleasurable discovery in a transient experience. But we are impelled forward and way by other and inevitable commitments. There are the ' Promises" which we have made to ourselves and to others, or which others have made for us And there are the miles we must travel through other kinds of experience before we yield to that final and inevitable commitment : sleep in death." Such vastness of meaning as this is nowhere explicitly given. It is only hinted at suggested and left to the reader's imagination where it unfolds into its full significance.

Frost's method of beginning a poem at some critical point and then letting the story come out in bits through dramatic dialogue was essentially suited to his role of a "synecdochist". In "Two Tramps in Mudtime," we find how the two tramps appeared casually while the poet was splitting wood in the yard and how silently they seemed to urge that they had a better claim to the work. Without elaborate description the poet then conveys to us the truth that only if one's vocation and avocation blend, only where love and need are one...Is the deed ever really done For Heaven and the future's sake. The "Death of a Hired Man", also through delicate touches and suggestions unfolds the story of a farmer and his wife who learn "Home is where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in." Examples can be multiplied to show the peculiar manner of Frost. Even in narrative stories he employs the same method of frugal suggestions. In stories like 'The Witch of Coos' and 'Paul's Wife' we find that the poet holds back a lot of facts letting out just enough details to make the reader's imagination set to work and have the added pleasure of completing the picture for himself. As an art form they are the better stories precisely because of the poet's way of using suggestion and understatement. "He is not seeing all he knows and he is not telling all he feels". In the significant poems like "Directive" too we find the same reticence on the part of the poet. Frost rarely insists or explains; he never says too much. "All that an artist needs", he said once "is samples".

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Q. 90. Write a critical appreciation of Frost's "Two Tramps In Mud Time."

Ans. "Two Tramps in Mud Time," first published in 1934 in *A Further Range*, is one of those rare lyrics in which Frost speaks in the first person and gives an account of his activities, attitudes and responses. It is a delightful picture of Frost, the farmer, working in his dooryard and talking with the passerby. The theme of the poem, according to Charles Kaplan, is "equilibrium and balance :" the desire, means and necessity of obtaining balance are subjects behind the incident.

In *The Dimensions of Robert Frost*, Reginald L. Cook says about the central point and the structure of the poem : "In structure its nine stanzas present a logical flow of reaction. The first stanza satisfies the three unities of time, place and action. The second stanza is concerned with self-justification. The third, fourth and fifth stanzas amplify the vagaries of New England seasonal climate. The sixth stanza embodies the chopper's euphoria The seventh stanza shifts the point of view from the interrupted chopper to the upraising lumberjacks. The eighth stanza points out the situation of the man who chops for love and the needy wayfarers who eye him in their extremity. The ninth stanza fuses the co-ordination of love and need and reconciles the tension which is psychological as well as economic."

Once on an April day, between winter and spring, the poet was splitting wood with a lively sense of satisfaction. They were big blocks of beech. Two tramps came walking down the muddy road. One of these welcomed the poet's hard work, saying "hit them hard". The poet knew very well that the tramp wanted to take the poet's job for the sake of earning money.

The poet had split the good pieces of a large tree. Every wooden piece that the poet hit with all his might fell down at once as though the rock had been broken into pieces. The self-control with which the poet was leading his life had given him the additional strength. The poet thinks that he should have made a better use of his time had he split some common wood, but he spent that day nearly on a pleasure affording hobby that rendered his soul loose.

The Tramps come out of the wood like some subhuman creature—"man of woods and lumber jacks." They think that they alone have the right to split wood and they must have judged the poet to be a fool from the way he held the axe. They did not say anything to the poet, but all the same the poet understood what they meant by staying over there to look at him. It was clear to the poet that he had no right to do the work for his pleasure through which they earn. By taking up their work for play, he was depriving them of the means of their livelihood :

My right might be love, but there was need
And where the two exist in twain
Theirs was the better right agreed.

But the poet is not going to surrender to the separation of work and love. His aim in life is to unite work and pleasure. To work delightfully is the roal heaven and the poet says :

My object in living is to unite
My avocation and vocation,
As my two eyes make one sight.

Thus a personal experience has been used to highlight universal truths. The idea that the best work is that which combines need with pleasure has been beautifully conveyed. Ultimately work is worship : duty is true beauty.

The poem "Two Tramps in Mud Time" is autobiographical. We have the picture of the poet caught splitting wood in the yard by two strangers. The poet enjoys the deed of splitting wood and seems to be quite good at it. Every piece he hits falls down "splinterless as a cloven rock." The day is fine and is described lovingly. The poet fondly describes the April day, with its warm sun and the chill wind and the gay visitor the blue bird.

A blue bird comes tenderly up to alight
And fronts the wind to unrufle a plume
His song so pitched as not to excite
A single flower as yet to bloom.
It is snowing a flake : and he half knew
Winter was only playing possum.
Except in color he isn't blue,
But he wouldn't advise a thing to blossom.

With such a setting for his task the poet loved the work and resented the intrusion of the men. He resented even more their silent suggestion that they, unemployed as they were, and badly in need of a means of livelihood, had a better right to the task than the poet. Though nothing was said on ether side the logic of their dumb reasoning was not lost upou the poet. It was in effect, that the poet had no right to play with what was anothe man's work for gain. His claim to the task was that he loved it ; but they had a greater claim—dire need. But the tug-of-war brings the poet to the conclusion which the final stanza beautifully expresses

But yield who will to their separation,
My object in living is to unite
My avocation and my vocation
As my two eyes make one in sight
Only where love and need are one,
And the work is play for mortal stakes
Is the deed ever really done
For Heaven and the future's sake.

We find here that the thought has suddenly soared from its immediate context. The New England country side and the warm April day are forgotten. The thought assumes universal application, for the poet has proceeded from the particular to the general and the transition is gentle and smooth, but illuminating. The idea of combining one's vocation and avocation is one that the poet himself practised.

The last stanza of this poem thus could be a very good summing up of what the poet's calling meant to Frost It was both his vocation and his avocation. The reader is urged to lend his vocation and his avocation too. Thus we see that here again the poetic impulse spurred on by something particular, giving rise to momentary delight, transcends the moment and the particular setting and becomes something universal in its application, something that inspires and edifies. In these instances we find that unlike Wordsworth who took pleasure in turning from the present to find an emotional excitement and inspiration in happy memories of t e past. Frost is for ever embarked on a quest of the present moment as the greatest reality. The moment becomes a metaphor which has for the poet beauty and meaning when the past cuts across it. Frost himself has explained it thus : "For me the initial delight is in the surprise of remembering something I didn't know. I knew, I am in a place, in a situation as if I had materialzed from a cloud or risen out of the ground. There is a recognition of the long lost and the rest follows. Step by step the wonder of unexpected supply keeps growing. The impressions most useful to my purpose seem always those I was unaware of and so made no note at the time when taken and the conclusion is come to that like agents we are always hurting experience ahead of us to pave the future with against the day when we may want to strike a line of purpose across it for somewhere." The poem gets written in a great mood of pleasure, which Frost de cribed thus : "The great pleasure in writing poetry is in having been carried off. It is as if you stood astride of the subject that lay on the ground, and then cut the cord, and the subject gets up under you and you ride it. You adjust yourself to the motion of the thing itself. That is the poem" At the end of this pleasant ride comes illuminating wisdom for the poet as well as for the reader.

"Two Tramps in Mud Time" is a striking example of the combination of psychological perception with visual imagination The la t stanza of this poem is a direct statement of Frost's conflicts as a man and as a poet. It is a statement of the polarities between his avocation and vocation In the last line Frost invokes heaven, but we do not know whether it is the heaven of orthodox Christianity or nearly some desirable state of existence imagined by Frost.

The poem is often praised for the admirable lesson with which

it ends. But according to M. Cowley, it makes the reader vaguely uncomfortable.

True to the nature of the theme, the movement of the poem is lyrical and reflected. In it, the poet indulges in a series of descriptions of Nature and her moods as though she was siding him in his pleasant task of wood chopping Frost is able to see the beauty not only of the manual work but also of Nature. Birds, wild flowers. brooks and trees appeal to us poignantly. The charm of many of the Nature lyrics results from the vividness with which sweet. delicate things stand out against the sombre background. Love of natural beauty and horror go side by side.

"Two Tramps in Mud Time" thus is remarkable for its lyricism, brevity, economy of expression and simplicity of diction, music and spoutaniety, philosophy of joining livelihood and hobby, vocation and avocation, experience and belief, its lesson and deep faith in the dignity of labour, its fusion of progressive and romantic poetry. its love for nature, its rhythm and melody, its tender phraseology, its imagery and figures of speech, its alliterations, frequent and abundant.

Q. 91. Write a critical appreciation of Frost's poem, "Birches.

Ans. This blank verse lyric was published in *Mountain Interval* in 1916. It is one of Frost's most widely quoted and anthologised nature lyrics. It is a remarkable poem for a skilful blend of fact and fancy, observation and imagination. According to C. Day Lewis, "This is a poem in which observation and reminiscence, realism and fancy, the light tone and the serious are perfectly blended." It moves with beautiful assurance from mood to mood, image to image, thought to thought. Its variations of speed within the blank verse metre are masterly.

Birches are a common sight in New England. The poet has observed their habits minutely, and in this admirable lyric he describes them precisely and accurately. The lyric begins in the tone of easy conversation : "When I see Birches bend to left and right " Then without warning or change of tone comes a whimsical and arresting image, and the face turns into a fancy : "I like to think some boy's been swinging them."

When the poet sees birches bending to right and left across the line of 'darker straighter trees', he imagines that some boy has been swinging them. But soon the truth dawns upon him and he realizes that swinging cannot bend them down permanently. It is the ice storm alone which can bend birches down to stay. After rain and storm the birches are covered with ice. The poet has observed the phenomenon minutely, and his description is vivid and picturesque. When the wind blows, the birches swing

up and down and the ice on them shines, and turns many coloured, as the rays of the sun are reflected in passing through ice. As the sun grows warmer, the ice is shaken down. It falls on earth covered with snow. It seems as if the central dome of heaven has cracked and the earth is covered with heaps of broken glass. It is with the burden of ice that the birches are bowed so low that they never straighten. From this fact the poet returns to his boyhood. He imagines that some boy, who lives too far from the town to learn base ball, devises a game for himself, a game which he can play alone, summer or winter. He takes to birch swinging as a pleasant sport. He climbs the birches over and over again, so much so that not a single tree remains unconquered and unbent. He has painstakingly acquired such skill that even when he reaches the top he is able to maintain the perfect balance, and

Then he flung outward heat first, with a swish,
Kicking his way down through the air to the ground.

The poet suddenly becomes reminiscent of his boyhood. He remembers the time when he himself was a swinger of birches. He dreams of swinging on the birches when he is "weary of consideration." Then by birch swinging he would get away from the earth. But he would never like to leave this earth permanently because

Earth is the right place for love
I do not know where it is likely to go better.

Thus the central theme of the poem is poet's love for the earth, yet there is some desire for escape from the weariness, the fever and the fret of life. There is a mark contrast in Frost and Keats and Shelley. The romantic poets of the 19th century England did not count to return to earth but Frost wanted to return to it.

The poem "Birchess" is inspired by the delight that the poet experiences on seeing the birches "bent to left and right, across the lines of straighter darker trees." His mind immediately conjures up the pictures of birches bent by a boy's swinging them, and birches bent down to stay by ice-storms. The poet's fancy lingers over these two pictures, and delicately weaves a fine web of fact and fancy. He describes the trees, and the havoc done to them by a turbulent ice-storm.

Often you must have seen them
Loaded with ice a sunny winter morning
After a rain. They click upon themselves
As the breeze rises, and turn many-coloured
As the stir cracks and crazes their enamel
Soon the sun s warmth makes them shed crystal
Shattering and avalanching on the snow-crust.

The poet describes vividly the boy moving up the trees, always keeping his poise, climbing carefully "with the same pains you use to fill a cup up to the brim, and even above the brim." Then comes the descent.

Then he flung outward feet first with a swish
Kicking his way down through the air to the ground.

There is obvious relish in the description for Frost is recalling his own pet game, while he was a boy. He confides to us, at this stage

So was I onc myself a swinger of birches
And so I dream of going back to be.

Now the poem moves to a deeper level for the memory of himself as a boy ascending to the heights above on the branch of birch induces in the poet's mind the idea of a brief escape from the woes and problems of this world The anguish of existence and the burning problems confronting man make him sigh for a brief respite. The poet longs to be a swinger of the birches once again, because he is "weary of considerations, and life is too much like a pathless wood," where the twig cuts across one's face and eye.

I'd like to get away from earth awhile
And then come to it and begin over.

But Frost assures us immediately that in his case world-weariness is not a lasting mood. His nostalgic longing for a get-away from the excessive cares of life, is only a brief one. He hastens to add that no fate should misunderstand his words and snatch him away from the surface of the earth never to return : for

Earth's the right place for love :
I don't know where it's likely to go better.

In fact earth is so good a place that the poet wants to be brought back after being carried by the black branches of birches to the fringe of heaven. The poem thus concludes on a note of affirmation a tore of robust optimism The poet is strengthened in his faith in goodness of life, in the feeling that all is well with the poem concludes on a note of a affirmation, a tone of robust optimism. The poet is strengthened in his faith in goodness of life, in the feeling that 'all is well with the world', as long as there is the capacity to love. This affirmation in the goodness of life and the efficacy of love is the message of the poet to the readers. This affirmation is the rsult of the wisdom to which the poetic impulse, through delight, has led the poet.

A symbolic interpretation may also be given to the poem. We can say that the poet is the symbol of human soul, the swinging is the mystic flight of the soul towards heaven, the birches are the good deeds of man to take him heavenward, the boyhood of the poet is the innocent state of the soul, the climbing, ascending and

bending of the birches stand for the obstacles in the path of soul's union with God.

The imagery of the poem is vivid and picturesque. The crystal ice becomes heaps of broken glass which is compared to the inner dome. The orchard trees are transformed into girls on hands and knees—the girls who throw their hair before them over their heads to dry in the sun. The country boy "whose only play was what he found himself", riding and subduing his father's birches, becomes the mature poet. One has just to quote a few lines to show the vividness and power of Frost's imagery :—

"......the sun warmth makes them shed crystal ice

... ...

You'd think the inner dome of heaven had fallen...

The language used is usually simple and clear. Some of its lines have epigrammatic force and terseness. The poem is remarkable for the poet's mastery over blank verse too. According to C. Day Lewis, "the upward and downward movement of the rhythm fully reflects the going up and coming down of the swinger of birches But when the poet moralizes the rhythm becomes slow." Mr. Bower also thinks that the poem has a perfect rhythmic form He writes : "The life of the poem, ever fresh, runs through the unbroken span of the verse, which will not be stopped until the end, and which carries the voice through a series of upward and downward swings, re-enacting the movement of thought."

It would be proper to conclude by quoting from C. Day Lewis : "like all Mr. Frost's best poems, this has worn and weathered well, and will go on doing so, because it is soundly constructed of season's materials," is carefully shaped and has a spirit of sober joy in it.

Q. 92. Write a note on Frost's poetie style or craftsmanship.

Or

Comment on Frost's poetic diction.

Ans. Frost carried on his own distinct experiments, emphasizing speech, rhythm and the sense of sound. A poem for him contained form and meaning. This form is made up with the sounds. His guiding principle was simplicity and clarity, variety and homeliness He said that he was "interested in emphasizing... the essence of sound, because to me a sentence is not interesting merely in conveying a meaning for words, it must do something more."

Whether in dialgue or in lyric, his poems are people talking ...the man who talks under the name of Robert Frost knows how to say a great deal in a short space. His is essentially a simple

poetic diction. What he presents is often written with grace and naturalness, for example see the diction of "Fire and Ice" :—

Som say the world will end in fire
Some say in ice,
From what I've tasted or desired
I hold with those who favor fire.
But if it had to persist twice
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice.

There are few cracks in his rhythms and verbal texture. To use Lawrence Tomson's words, "He uses a simple colloquial diction, which is, however, purified, in the manner of Wordsworth, of all that is slangy, coarse and vulgar." One will agree with this estimate if one reads only the following lines from "Stopping By Wood" :—

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
but I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep
And miles to go before I sleep.

Thus Frost can produce marvellous effects by mere repetition. Similarly he can become aphoristic and proverbial :—

(a) *My object in living is to unite*
My avocation and vocation
"—Two Trumps in Mud Time"

(b) *Good fences make good neighbours*
—"Mending Wall"

(c) *Nothing can make injustice just mercy.*

There are in his verse a laconic (brief) speech, a picturesqueness of phrase, a stiffness of lips, a quizzicality of attitude, a twistness of approach to thought. There are also parenthesis, pauses, breaks, unfinished sentences, haulting measure, sudden ejaculations, repetition and abrupt opening and above all a regional flavour.

"Frost has turned the living speech of man and woman into poetry...Tales that might be mere anecdotes in the hands of another poet take a universal significance because of their native voracity, and truth to local character." These words of W. W. Gibson about Frost sound the keynote of Frost's poetic style. Frost's language is plain, lacking in rhetoric. It can be compared to that of Wordsworth. He economizes expression. His people speak cautiously amid intervals of silence, making each word count. Volubility would be alien to Frost as to his people. He often uses words in their root-sense and makes serious puns. His lines hover

between regular metre and speech rhythms. He believed in the phrase and sentence sounds that underlie the word.

Explaining his theory of diction Frost said, "What I am interested in emphasizing is the essence of sound, because to me a sentence is not interesting merely in conveying a meaning of words, it must do something more; it must convey a meaning by sound... This sound of which I speak has primarily to do with tone. It is what Mr. Bridges characterized as speech rhythm. Meter has to do with beat, and sound posture has a definite relation as an alternate tone between the beats. The two are one in creation but separate in analysis."

His poems take shape spontaneously. He believed that 'a poem is never a put-up-job'. He differed from those who believe that a poem is a thing deliberately constructed. To him poetry was a metaphor. He gave importance to metaphor and dramatic element in his poetry. In "Constant Symbol" he says, "There are many other things. I have found myself saying about poetry, but the chiefest of these is that it is a metaphor, saying one thing and meaning another, saying one thing in terms of another, the pleasure of ulteriority. Poetry is simply made of metaphor...... Every poem is a new metaphor inside or it is nothing. And there is a sense in which all poems are the same old metaphor always."

Thus for Frost poetry is metaphor. In the final analysis, Frost regarded the poem as a combination of impulse and art—both essential for its merit. He values both spontaniety or lyricism and discipline in his artistic expression. He gives a dramatic situation or twist to most of his poems by developing them through speakers or character. This adds intensity to his art.

Some of his poems are remarkable for their conversational beauty (e. g. *Death of the Hired Man*), some for their narration (the longer ones), some others are famous for their dramatic twists (e. g. *Snow*, *The Code*, *Home Burial*), and still some others for their realistic and natural details and structure. He also makes uses of frequent dashes, and in this respect can be compared to Emily Dickinson. He is essentially a poet of simple poetic diction. "His stark simplicities are the simplicities a man finds after experience and a great deal of painful self-questioning." His style is often sententious. Sometimes he succeeds in creating a subtle musical effect by means of employing simple monoslyllables. "By consciously and consistently maintaining a conversational tone, he keeps the texture of his verse remarkably even." (C. Day Lewis).

In the employment of blank-verse Frost has given evidence of a high class skill. In his poems from *Plane to Plane*, *Mending Wall*, *Birches* high level of his blank verse is quite in evidence. Nothing shows his originality so strikingly as Frost's language in

which we find a strange blending of the traditional and the contemporary. Even in some of his best poems Frost has used natural symbols the reference of which we find it difficult to control.

Most of his poetry is cast in the traditional iambic metre. Frost is not an innovator as were Yeats, Eliot, Pound and Auden. His handling of rhythm is distinctive. His talking rhythm results from a close blocking of looseness and fllexibility with regularity, reiteration and lightness. Admiring his skill in verse form, Elizabeth Zenning observes that Frost's verse is formal, even at time, stately; its movements are often easily anticipated. The amazing flexibility and variety of his blank verse is also admirable.

SINCLAIR LEWIS (1885-1951)

Q. 93. Comment on Lewis' place among the writers of American fiction.

Or

Write an essay on the satire of Sinclair Lewis.

Ans. The beginning of the twentieth century witnessed the strengthening and a flowering of the realistic trends that had appeared in American fiction by the end of the previous century. Howells' mild realism gave place to the sterner naturalism of Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, Jack London, and Theodore Dreiser. Socialistic impulses began to appear in the novels of this period and Upton Sinclaire's *Jungle* marked the triumph of the novel as a vehicle to spread ideas of humanitarian reform. Along with these trends, a strong vein of satire had also crept into fiction by this time. Realism, working hand in hand with satire proved a mighty step in the development of twentieth century novel. With H. L. Mencken and with Sinclair Lewis, the realistic movement in American literature entered a new phase.

Sinclair Lewis (1885—1951) belonged to a period of national self-scrutiny. His mission in life was to devote his great gifts as a satirist to the scourging of this world, to the sanctification of American society and the purging of all that was evil in it, whether merely complacent or definitely base. Armed with a fierce desire for a good society, and his furious passion for justice, he launched a fierce attack upon these evils great and small. He took the novel as his medium. And it is not as a writer of verse he wrote some verse in his college days—not as a dramatist. not as a writer of short stories, not as a contributor of controversial articles, but as a novelist that Sinclair Lewis is known all over the world. And his novels are all fine examples of the writer's task of correcting social evil through ridicule and satire.

As early as 1905 while at college, Sinclair Lewis began a novel *The Village Virus* which, unfinished as it is, indicates the rebel in him. The book or what got written of it, is important as it is a prophecy of Lewis' first major work "Main Street", a book through which he struck a mortal blow at the 'boo boisie' small town life, exposing the utterly intolerable drabness, narrowness and complacency of Gopher Prairie, Minnesota. The 'book was accorded such an enthusiastic welcome on being published in 1920 that Professor Mark Schorer, Lewis's biographer describes its publication as "the most sensational event in the twentieth century publishing history." The book tells without any dramatic or colourful incident the story of a romantic half educated mid-western girl

Carol Kenicott who marries a small town doctor Will Kennicott. She rebels against the monotony and drabness of her life and fights against what she calls the "village virus". The lawyer Guy Pollock, one of the characters in the novel explains to Carol that village virus is an infection to which ambitious people in small towns are peculiarly susceptible Gradually and imperceptibly it saps them of their hope and energy and narcotizes rebelliousness and reduces the victim to the same dead level of the lifeless majority residing in "a respectable form of hell " We are to infer that in the end Carol gets infected with village virus, herself : for after a brief flurry of non-conformity, she accommodates herself to her husband and her destiny.

The book was an immediate success and was translated quickly into several languages. England hailed Lewis as the Dickens of Amer ca. And because of his revelation of the minutest details of small-town life in America, he has been recognised as the kin of the English novelist Arnold Bennett who wrote of life in the small towns of his native Staffordshire in most of his books, the best of which are *The Old Wives Tales* and *Clayhanger*. Though many people including Sherwood Anderson, never quite forgave Lewis for reducing American small towns to hot dusty places poepled by boasters and liars, "never tender about anything or anyb dy, never human", the iconoclasm of Lewis delighted innumerable admirers. The saw in the book a powerful presentation of their own case against what was mean and dispiriting in North American life. They saw in the Main street of Gopher Prairie Minnesota, the continuation of Main Street everywhere. As one critic has put it : "The story would be the same in Ohio or Montana, in Kensas of Kentucky or Illinois and not very differently would it be told up York State or in the Corolina hills."

Lewis' next great offer to the world was his novel *Babbitt*, published in 1922 This book has been as popular as *Main Street* and has been a universal favourite with critics, for in addition to his usual display of keen-edged satire, Lewis has created an immortal character, Babbit, in the novel—a character, comparable to Mr. Micawber in 'David Copperfield.' George Babbitt is an average businessman of a growing city. He is full of complacency and pride in his money, popularity and position. Through a series of shattering events, Babbit is brought ro a state of mind in which he questions the value of money. He evinces a thorough change but outwardly he conforms to the code and coventions of society. In *Babbitt* Sinclair Lewis lampoons the smugness and philistinism of the American businessman. So true to life is the characterization that terms Babbitt and Babbittry have become a part of the every day language of the people 'Babbitt' with its satire on the Rotarian and go-getter had a subject of more permanent interest for habbittry has changed only its objectives not its spirit. The book exhibitits Lewis' sardonic humour, his devastating mimicry of

American jargon, and his Dickensian caricature. But the success of the book was great end enduring

The next novel of Sinclair Lewis was *Arrowsmith*. In it he found a subject of the devoted scientist, researcher and physician in conflict with the forces that attempt to sensationalise his work and to commercialize and monopolize his discoveries. In *Main Street* and *Babbitt* Lewis had relentlessly satirized the ideals of success generally sought and accepted by the Americans. But in the figure of Martin Arrowsmith he created a man who struggles against such success, a success that would stifle the seeker of truth in him. Martin Arrowsmith takes his medical degree from the University of Winnemac. In the medical college he is quite won over by Professor Max Gottlieb a German scientist, utterly wedded to his scientific research. Martin is drawn to Madeline Fox, a young woman who feels at home in the glittering world of Zenith with its art exhibitions and musical concert. But real love comes to Martin in the form of a young nurse Leora Tozer. Martin marries her despite adverse circumstances and feels strong because of her understanding and love. Martin starts practising at Wheatsylvania but wins a number of enemies. Later working as the head of the Department of Public Health, under the inspiration of famous scientist Goutave Sondelius, Martin makes himself thoroughly unpopular on account of his zealous attempts at promoting public health, working in Nautilus under Dr. Pickerbaugh, he feels disgusted with the Professor's boisterous campaigning for health. Here again Martin, by being true to his scientific spirit alienates the sympathies of a considerable section of society. Max Gottlieb, the hero of young Martin reappears in his life and under his influence Martin does intense research work. He discovers the X—Principle, a bacterial infection that can have great possibilities in the treatment of diseases. The directors of the Mc Gurk institute where Martia works, urge him to publish his discovery quickly. But Martin refuses to court publicity and fame before he has learned all the aspects of the X—Principle. But the time it is learned that some one at the Pasteure Institute has already published a paper on the same phenomenon and has called it bacteriophage. Martin's research in 'phage' and its applicability for curing bubonic plague takes him and Sondelius to the island of St. Hubert where the disease rages. Martin refuses to give the phage to people untill all its properties have been studied. Sondelius dies of infection and once while Martin is away at a village Leora, smoking a half-smoked cigarette saturated with germs from an over-turned test tube catches the infection and dies. Martin's world is shatt red. He is no longer the pure researcher, he gives the phage to all who ask for it. He comes back to New York and is given a hero's welcome. In his loneliness and misery he turns to Joyce Lanyon a rich young widow. He marries her but recoils from her attempts at reforming him and making him fit into the fashionable world. The break between them comes when he turns down the offer of

directorship of Mc Gurk Institute. For her it is very symbol of success, and is a most covetable position. For Martin it can mean only strangling of his scientific sincerity. He leaves Joyce to go and experiment with his friend Terry Wickett on the cure for pneumonia. With all connec ion with Joyce and a smart society severed he feels free. "I feel as if I were really beginning to work now. This new quinine stuff may prove pretty good. We'll plug along on it for two or three years, and may be we'll get something permanent—and probably we'll fail".

The story of Martin Arrowsmith is heavy with Lewis' satire. At every stage of Martin's development we find him pitted against insincerity, hypocrisy and commercialism. The medical students of Winnemac University offer a striking collection. In Angus Duer the mercenary and conceited fellow, Fatty Pfaff who knew nothing of medicine, and yet passed the exam. with the help of the "crib" prepared by his anxious fellow students, the Reverned Ira Hinkley "as sincere as a cockroach", a strong athlete and a joyful puritan who with annoying virility preached the doctrine of his tiny sect the sanctification Brotherhood, that to have a beautiful church was almost as damnable as the debaucheries of card-playing", all afford early examples in the book of Lewis' satire. The uneducated bankers and businessmen occupying the position of Regents of Universities is something that Sinclair Lewis found ridiculous. The Regents were the supreme rulers of the University; they were bankers and manufacturers and pastors of large churches; to them even the president was humble. Nothing gave them more interesting thrills than the dissecting room of the medical school. The preachers spoke morally of the effect of alcohol on paupers, and the bankers of the "disrespect for saving-accounts which is always to be seen in the kind of men who insist on becoming cadavers." When Cliff Clawson, drops a pancreas into the derby hat reverently held behind him by "the plumpest and most educational of all bankers," we feel that the right treatment is meted out to him and his co-Regents. Doctors who do not have a sense of the sacredness of their calling scientists who have no thirst for research, physicians whose primary motive is making money and getting successful, are all ridiculed. Dr. Loyd Davidson is an illu tration of these. "This professor of materia medica would have been an illustrious shop-keeper. He was very popular. From him a future physician could learn that most important of all things: the proper drugs to give a patient, particularly when you cannot discover what is the matter with him. His classes listened with zeal and memorized the sacred hundred and fifty favourite prescriptions (He was proud that this was fifty more than his predecessor had required)." Again we find all the fury of Lewis' satire bursting forth when he attributes to a famous doctor, Doctor Roscoe Geake, a speech on "The Art and Science of Furnishing the Doctor's Office." Urging the medical students to

be 'successful' well-paid doctors, with every sign of affluence he argues, "And from a scientific standpoint, don't overlook the fact that the impression of properly remunerated competence which you make on a patient is of just as much importance in these days of the new psychology, as the drugs you get into him or the operation he lets get away with. The minute he begins to see that other folks appreciate and reward your skill, that minute he must begin to feel your power and so get well." This very practical rendering of the art of healing calls to our mind some of the bitter passages in Cronin's novels such as "The Citadel." Doctors who care for publicity and so-called success, pseudo-scientists interested in personal advancement alone, public Health Officers whose aim is only publicity all have Sinclair Lewis' merciless whip lashed at them. They are adequately represented in the figures of Dr. Almus Pickerbaugh, Dr. Rippleton Holabird and a host of others. Along with these are partrayed the ignorant cooing ladies, and the wealthy businessmen, who provide the society in which these insincere doctors flourish. Sincere genuine scientists feel out of place in the midst of such dinners as are given by the Mc Gurk Institute; a picture of which is drawn by the novelist in deft words: "There was vast music, vaster food; there were uncomfortable scientists explaining to golden cooing ladies, in a few words just what they were upto and what in the next twenty years they hoped to be upto; there were the cooing ladies themselves observing in tones of pretty rebuke, 'But I'm afraid you haven't yet made it as clear as your might.' There were the cooing ladies' husbands—college graduates, manipulators of oil stocks or of corporation law—who sat ready to give to a body who desired it their opinion that while antitoxins might be racy, what we really needed was a good substitute for rubber." But with the picture of snobbery, hypocrisy and commercialism that Lewis draws in *Arrowsmith* is pungent. We have the picture of Max Gottlieb, one of those men who are devoted to the task of building an ideal world. Gottlieb, the hero of *Arrowsmith*, the lonely seeker of truth, a hater of all forms of greed and fraud, is the type for which Lewis cared most. Martin too is a projection of the scientific and reforming spirit of Lewis and into his mouth Sinclair puts his own most sincerely-cherished sentiments: "God give me unclouded eyes and freedom from haste. God give me quiet and relentless anger against all pretense and all pretentious work and all work left slack and unfinished. God give me a relentlessness whereby I may neither sleep nor accept praise till my observed results equal my calculated results or in pious glee I discover and assault my error. God give me strength not to trust to God."

The remarkable thing about Sinclair Lewis' satire is that he was always ready to pay homage to goodness when he saw it. He was not denouncing American scientists and doctors 'en bloc'. In stray figures like Gottlieb, Martin, Soundelius and Terry Wickett,

he saw the genuine scientists and dedicated doctors who have helped humanity to progress. They are all free from prejudice, greed, the lust for war, religious fanaticism and racial hatred. In Martin's refusal to be awed by the war uniform, and in his frank avowal of the cleverness of a negro doctor we have the assurance that Lewis was hopeful for America's men of science. He was not a cynic, nor was he a hater of America and her ways of life.

In *Dodsworth* (1929) we have another of Sinclair Lewis' portraits of Zenith residents. The book tells the story of Samuel Dodsworth, a successful automobile manufacturer, burdened with a shallow snobbish wife Fran Dodsworth. Tracing the frustrations of this typical American, in the sophisticated world of Europe, Lewis displays his sympathy for Dodsworth. *Dodsworth* was Sinclair Lewis' last notable contribution. Here as in *Arrowsmith* he has dealt with a subject of lasting human interest. The theme of Dodsworth is not just topical : it is one that involves moral integrity and hence is bound to be appealing for ever. Sam Dodsworth who is the very epitome of outward success, is a failure within himself, and is a convincingly drawn character ; Fran, his selfish, mean wife represents that type of American womanhood that is directly opposite to the exquisitely drawn Leora of *Arrowsmith*. After *Dodsworth* Lewis talents show a marked decline, though he wrote a number of books. Critics differ as to which of his books is his best. Those who opt for *Arrowsmith* point out the authenticity of scientific details introduced, the number of well-drawn characters, and the inspiring effect that the novel has on the readers. As a novelist Lewis believed in thoroughness. His novels are all well-documented. One who knew him well has said : "when he writes a novel he will travel to the ends of the earth to get data. He will interview people in all walks of life, secure practical experience by actually doing, read reference books, live where necessary to get atmosphere " This is especially true of *Arrowsmith*. In characterisation the book is outstanding. Martin Arrowsmith, a lovable young man with his weakness and his strength stands out in bold relief against a background of charlatanism and materialism, the target of the author's satire. Leora, Martin's wife is one of the most endearing portraits painted by Lewis. About her Henry Seidel Canby, an eminent American literary critic, writes : "She convinces absolutely like one of Jane Austen's characters without any apparent effort on the part of the novelist to make her convincing." This he achieves through sincerity, restraint and insight into human nature.

The success of Sinclair Lewis as a novelist and as a satirist lay in the fact that he was no misanthrope or cynic, though he was a debunker. He loved humanity and he liked the absurdities which he found everywhere in American life and he shared the aspirations of his countrymen for getting ahead in the world and their delight in mechanical gadgets and material comforts, their yearning for

warm personal relationships, their basic optimism. He neither shared Mark Twain's pessimisms for life seemed to him very interesting ; nor did he share Mark Twain's high animal spirit, his pity for the underdog, his hot head and his warm heart, his passionate impulsive mercurial quixotism. In his temperamental zeal for reforms Lewis suggested Charles Dickens. He has even been called the American Dickens.

In Lewis' comparative disregard for the treatment and style of his novels, there is something almost Philistine. The subject was all important to him and he took such care for documentation that the result is at times rambling and unwielding. Each of his novels had a major theme, a type or aspect of American life, the theatre, editing, evangelism, manufacturing, science, and so on, so that in spite of their weaknesses, the total effect of the book is to give a panorama of twentieth century American civilization He could very well be called the conscience of his country and his vitality and crusading fervour brought about many reforms. Upon the literature of the 1920's too he acted as a liberating force.

Q. 94. Do you consider 'Arrowsmith' as the best of Sinclair Lewis' novels ? Justify your opinion.

Or

Write a critical appreciation of "Arrowsmith."

Ans. When Sinclair Lewis, the first American to receive the Nobel Prize in literature, was awarded this high honour the official citation was : "The 1930 Nobel Prize in Literature is awarded to Sinclair Lewis for his powerful and vivid art of description and his ability to use wit and humour in the creation of original characters." It has been believed that *Arrowsmith* was the chief reason for the author's winning of the Nobel Prize, though *Main Street* published in 1920 and *Babbitt* in 1922 were highly popular.

Main Street satirised the small town of America, and *Babbitt* exposed modern American city life. Both were superb pieces of vivid portrayal of communites and are alive with Lewis' genius for satire. *Main Street* and *Babbitt* are unforgettable records of human frailties and foibles, ridiculed with he intention of correction. *Babbitt* is so successful that the terms 'babbitt' and 'babbittry' have passed into the English language. But in *Arrowsmith* the readers of Lewis found a lot more than satire ; they saw a novel with many-sided greatness, and those who declare this as the best novel of Sinclair Lewis have ample justification.

The renown that Sinclair Lewis has earned as one of the greatest prose satirists in English, has tended to eclipse his merits as a novelist. Lewis is a great satirist, but he is more than that. He is a writer with a deep understanding of human nature and an

extraordinary ability to draw characters and portray life. These abilities of Lewis are nowhere better illustrated than in his own favourite among his works *Arrowsmith*.

Arrowsmith like Sinclair Lewis' other books abounds in satire. Those admirers of his biting and witty censure of narrow-mindedness and commercialism associated with the different walks of American small-town and city life have no reason to be disappointed in *Arrowsmith*. For here again are flashes the bright satire of Sinclair Lewis. This time the assault is against commercialism in medicine and science Through the story of young Martin Arrowsmith, Sinclair Lewis brings to light many an evil that he saw closely wedded to the medical profession and scientific pursuit. Martin's experiences at Winnemac University make us realise that institutions where doctors who were to serve humanity are formed, are run in a manner that is far behind the ideal Among the professors who were to shape the future doctors, many were insincere, and many hopelessly inadequate, stuffing their heads with irrelevant superficial information like Dr. Oliver Stout, Professor of anatomy who had "precise and enormous knowledge and who in his dry voice could repeat more facts about the left little toe than you would have thought anybody would care to learn regarding the left little toe." Among the thoroughly mercenary and commercial-minded professer, a man like Max Gottlieb with his passionate sense of dedication to scientific research seems misfit. In fact nothing in the book brings home to the readers Lewis' point so effectively as the fact of Max Gottlieb, his years of struggle against hostility, poverty and utter discouragement. Yet the man never wavers from his path and remains the true lover of science that Lewis wants the world to revere.

The students of the Winnemac Medical School were also a curious assortment. Lewis is well-aware of the fact that it is not the desire to serve humanity tnat always draws young men to the study of medicine. Martin Arrowsmith, with the flame of idealism ever aglow in his heart, feels disgusted with the Angus Duers and Irving Watterses who were "fight tradesmen" and whose mercenary motives detracted from the sacredness of the calling which they had taken up. The impression that Lewis wants us to have of the aspiring doctors of Winnemac medical school is not very complimentary to them ; for he wants us to see them through the eye of Dr. Max Gottlieb who, about to cut open a guineapig, thinks : "wretched innocent ! why should I murder him, to teach Dumm Kopfe ? (idiots). It would be better to experiment on that for young man."

The scandalous commercialism behind the running of such institutions is revealed by Lewis through his depiction of the Board of Regents, who made occasional visits to the University These supreme rulers of the University were neither scientists, nor doctors, but bankers, and manufacturers and pastors of large churches.

When they addressed the students, as in their elevated position they were expected to do, it was about "the effects of alcohol on paupers", and of 'the disrespect for savings-accounts which is always to be seen in the kind of men who insist on becoming cadavers'. One cannot blame the irrepressible Clawson for dropping the damp and disgusting pancreas into the derby hat of one of the Regents.

As Martin Arrowsmith comes out of the University and takes up the profession of doctor, he learns the significance of the advice given by Dr. Roscoe Geake, a professor at Winnemac whom he detested. This is the speech that the novelist has attributed to him : "Knowledge is the greatest thing in the medical world but it's no good whatever unless you can sell it, and to do this you must first impress your personality on the people who have the dollars. Whether a patient is a new or an old friend, you must always use statemanship on him. Explain to him, also to his stricken and anxious family the hard work and thought you are giving to his case, and so make him feel that the good you have done him or intend to do him, is even greater than the fee you plan to charge. Then, when he gets your bill he will not misunderstand or kick." As the story unfolds itself we realise how an alarming proportion of doctors are followers of this gospel. The struggles and hostility that Martin has to face as a result of his conscientious adherence to his principles wherever he goes remind us of the difficulties of Cronin's young doctor in *Citedel*. Dr. Pickerbaugh whose inexhaustible thirst for publicity often hindered pure scientific research, the important figures at Mc Gurk Institute of Science who were innocent of scientific spirit of knowledge of science, are all well drawn figures who are used for the purpose of debunking the so-called scientists. Lewis shows how institutions set up apparently for promoting scientific research are the greatest centres of snobbery and meanness and commercialism ruled by nagging unintelligent yet dominating women and insignificant husbands. The alleged 'barbarism' of Martin and the comparative lack of 'refinement' in Leora are effective contrasts to the snobbery and 'culture' of people like Madeline Fox, and Joyce Lanyon and the wives of the directors of Mc Gurk Institute and so on.

The satire in 'Arrowsmith' thus, is far more important than that in 'Main Street' or 'Babbitt'. Its applicability is not restricted to the American small town and American city. In *Arrowsmith* Lewis has given breadth to his satire choosing a theme which has universality of appeal, and which does not become out-dated soon. Doctors and scientists are not the only people exposed by the writer. Lewis flashes the searchlight of his ridicule into many aspects of life, the greed for power behind human activities, the empty headedness of prominent social-figures, and the mania of hate and militarism that affect all sorts of people during the time of war. The demoralising effect of war is commented upon by Lewis thus : "Incredulously he (Max Gottlieb) perceived women

asserting that all Germans were baby-killers, universities barring the language of Heme. orchestras out-lawing the music of Beethoven. professors in uniform bellowing at clerks, and the clerks never protesting." In the midst of such a mad rush to the 'mockeries of war' Gottlieb was di missed as flippant when he said : "I am willing to admit every virtue of the French—I am very fond of that so individual people—but on the theory of probabilities, I suggest that there must be some good Germans out of sixty milliions." The tragedy of war is symbolised by the lot of Gottlieb who was at Mc Gurk Institute at the time of war. "When the institute sanctified war, he found himself regarded not as the great and impersonal immunoligist but as a suspect German Jew." In all this we find Sinclair Lewis preoccupied with an issue that not America alone, but the entire world should pay heed to.

Th theme of the novel *Arrowsmith* therefore is far greater than that of either *Main Street* or *Babbitt* But this alone does not make the work greater than the other books. In *Arrowsmith* Sinclair Lewis has given a striking gallaxy of characters. Martin Arrowsmith, Leora and Max Gottlieb are more memorable than all the other characters that appear in the novels of Lewis. They are the positive beacons illuminating an otherwise dark world. In Martin Arrowsmith we have the type of character that Lewis loved to have as his hero His idealism, his infinite capacity for work. his occasional fumbling and his final self-realisation are all factors that make the protrait of Martin Arrowsmith one of the best that Lewis ever painted. Through the long and rambling novel the reader traces the career of Martin and his long search for truth with unflagging interest.

One of the most important reasons for the popular appeal of this novel is the characterisation of Leora She is superbly drawn. From the time Martin meets her at Zenith General Hospital to the time she dies of the plague on the island of St. Hubert, she remains an intensely convincing character. She is simple, without ever being unintelligent, she is natural and entirely free from cant. She loves Martin whom she encourages in his research work and whose work she watches over with loving eyes. She has a genius for effacing herself and giving all importance to Martin and his work. But when she finds that he is being swept off his feet by undesirable forces, she does much to restore him to sanity. Her love for him is so great that she cannot bear to be separated from him while he leaves for St. Hubert This is what she tells him : "Sandy, don't you know I haven't any life outside of you ? I might've had, but honestly I've been glad to let you absorb me. I'm a lazy, useless ignorant scut except as may be I keep you comfortable. If you were off there and if I didn't know you were all right, or if you died and somebody else cared for your body that I've loved so—I'd go mad." But it is Leora who falls a victim to the plague on St. Hubert. Her death is cruel. It is the saddest

irony of fate that she who came to be with him every moment had to die feeling bewildered and lonely, longing for Martin, feeling desperately frightened to start on her long journey without his hand to comfort her. Her death naturally makes Martin go to pieces. Her influence on him and her sterling qualities are made aparent when Martin suffers from the second marriage which he blunders into.

Max Gottlieb is another superbly drawn figure in the novel. He is the symbol of all the qualities that Lewis cherished as great in a scientist The only epithet that one can use to describe this German Jew is 'great'. It is not surprising that it is Leora of all characters in the novel, that describes him in unmistakable terms as a great man. She speaks to Martin immediately after meeting Professor Gottlieb. "Sandy he is the greatest man I've ever seen ! I don't know how I know, but he is ! Dr. Silva is a darling but that was a great man ! There's the first man I ever laid eyes on that I'd leave you for, if he wanted me. He's so—oh, he's like a sword—no, he's like a brain walking."

Yet this great man has to struggle against poverty, and blind prejudices and anti-German feeling during the war. The good man who has dedicated his whole life for pure science is baffled by the feeling of hate and racial prejudices that war gives rise to. Gottlieb once tells Martin : "perhaps I am crank Martin……I make many mistakes. But one thing I always keep pure : the religion of a scientist." And he always remained true to this religion. "He had never dined with a duchess, never received a prize, never been interviewed, never produced anything which the public could understand, or experienced anything since his school boy amours which nice people could regard as romantic. He was in fact an authentic scientist."

A part from the major characters, Martin, Leora and Gottlieb, there are a host of other memorable characters in the novel. Pickerbaugh, Sondelius, Holabird, Terry Wickett are all figures that remain alive in our memory because they are drawn by a master.

Apart from characterization, there are reasons that make the book a masterpiece. Of all the novels of Lewis this is the one over which he took most pains. The idea of writing the novel *Arrowsmith* dawned on Sinclair Lewis one night in the summer of 1922 while he was listening to a heated debate on medical teaching and science. As the idea took (root) in his mind he turned to a young bacteriologist from Rockfeller Institute Dr. Paul Henry asking him to keep an eye on the scientific aspects of the novel. This young man has in fact served as the model for Sinclair Lewis' portrayal of Martin Arrowsmith. The innumerable scientific details that fill the book are all authentic as a result of years of patient research. Those who have studied Lewis' method of novel-

writing say that when he wrote a novel he went to any extent to get data for them. "He will interview people in all walks of life, secure practical experience by actually doing, reading reference books, live where necessary to get atmosphere", writes George Jean Nathan. Of all books of Lewis "Arrowsmith" is the most authentic most richly documented. Though not a scientist Lewis approached his work on 'Arrowsmith" in a manner that reflects the spirit of a scientist. The book, above all, deals with the most appealing of Lewis' themes—that of a young lovable scientist 'torn by the conflict between his innate humanitarianism and his scientific training in the midst of the epidemic in St. Hubert.' The novel has an inspiring effect on the reader, an effect that *Main Street, Dodsworth* and *Babbitt* for all the brilliance of their satire do not have. Lewis having written several major novels before *Arrowsmith*, his style has become mature, and effective. It is playful at times, and poetic often, but eminently readable always. *Arrowsmith* was Lewis' own favourite. He once said that it was the only one of his novels he "can stand reading."

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Q. 95. Sketch the character of Martin Arrowsmith.

Ans. "God give me unclouded eyes and freedom from hnste. God give me quiet and relentless anger against all pretsnce and all pretentious work and all work left slack and unfinished. God give me a restlessness whereby I may neither sleep nor accept praise till my observed results equal my calculated results or in pious glee I discover and assault my error. God give me strength not to trust to God." Thus prays Martin Arrowsmith, the hero of Sinclair Lewis' novel *Arrowsmith*. The prayer is significant for it reveals Martin's qualities that make him the typical Sinclair Lewis hero, full of idealism, integrity and deep seriousness, and a consumate passion for scientific truth.

Martin is endowed with a great deal of ruggedness that makes him fit for the great struggle that he has to face Significantly enough Lewis begins the book with an episode from the life of the great-grandmother of Martin Arrowsmith just to show how grit and courage were native to his stock. The boy Martin sitting cross-legged in the examining chair of Dr. Vickerson of Winnemac pouring over *Grany s Anatomy* gives us promise of a bright and sincere doctor bent on acquiring more and yet more scientific knowledge. Wherever Martin goes, he stands out by virtue of his sense of purpose, his determination to seek for the truth and not be satisfied with anything less. In Winnemac University he is entirely different from the other students of medicine. His soul is filled with a love of the science of medicine and so he is full of admiration for Max Gottlieb, the professor of bacteriology for whom intergrity in scientific pursuit is a passion All his life the figure of Max Gottlieb lingers before Martin' mind encouraging him when

he is doing the right thing and frowning at him when he deviates from the right path. It is no wonder that Gottlieb loves Martin for he is quite different from the dull-headed Fatty Pfaff or indifferent Cliff Clawson or the Stuck-up Angus Deur. But other professors dislike the attitude of Martin and resent his insistence on truth for his questions embarrass and annoy them. But Gottlieb inspires Martin to do research on his own, in the laboratory. Whenever Gottlieb encourages him by taking active interest in his work Matin feels intoxicated with happiness.

Martin's period of study in the medical college is marked also by his interest in the world of art and literature in which to his envy Angus Deur feels quite at home. The elegance of the brilliant world of Zenith in which he feels deficient is desired by Martin. The well-dressed young men doing waltz become objects of his envy. For as the novelist puts it : ' There was no strength, no grace, no knowledge that Martin Arrowsmith did not covet, when consciousness of it had pierced through the layers of his absorption. If he was but little greedy for possession, he was hungry for every skill." It it this aspect of Martin's character that makes him imagine that he is in love with Madeline. Because she belongs to the glittering world in which he feels an alien, he thinks that he must possess her But when he comes across Leora he understands the difference between make-belief and reality. He feels at ease in Leora's company for he feels they are kindred spirits It is characteristic that Martin gets himself entangled in the difficult situations of being engaged to two girls at the same time. Naively he decides to let the situation unravel itself, and thus does something that a 'clever' man would not have dreamt of doing Inviting Leora and Madeline to dinner he frankly confesses his dilemma and fortunately for him it is Leora who remains immensely tickled by the novelty of the situation, while Madeline in a huff walks out of Martin's life. Leora's child-like simplicity, her love for him, and her utter unconcern for other people's opinion or for shining in society are qualities that make Martin feel restful. Her encouragement whets his own appetite for truth. He is lucky to have something that can set any man on the path of ultimate success—the understanding and love of a good woman. Yet we find that while Martin is tender and loving to her always, he is human enough to be flattered by the attention of other women. A few years after their marriage, though still in love with Leora, he likes to flirt with Orchid Pickerbaugh, but he knows all along that he can love none but Leora. Joyce Lanyon's sophistication and ease attract him and because of the desperate loneliness that Leora's death plunges him into. he thinks he loves Joyce and marries her. But their worlds are different and they collide with force. Martin realises his folly and is fed up with her attempts to make him fit into her type of society. The glitter of the smart world no longer

holds any attraction for Martin. Through suffering he has arrived at self-realisation.

Martin the idealist has plenty of courage and firmness when the occasion demands it. He is impulsive and his impulsive behaviour makes him lose his position as assistant of Gottlieb in the college just before his marriage. Ironically enough Martin comes into clash with the man whom he adores—Max Gottlieb. While working in the laboratory, Gottlieb, jumping and testy as a result of working on an experiment for eighteen hours, orders him about which Martin resents. He walks out and refuses to apologize to Gottlieb. Cliff Clawson's friendship also is frowned upon by the authorities. But Martin refuses to give up his friendship to please anybody. Penniless. and without the prospect of a job Martin takes the train to Wheatsylvania. He is filled with the sense of his tragic situation. But "the real tragedy he felt was that though Gottlieb had betrayed him and ended his career, ended the possibility of his mastering seience and marrying Leora, he still worshipped the man." But soon he finds himself married to Leora, but the helplessness of his situation brings prudence to him and he traces his steps to the Winnemac Medical School.

Thus his career after a brief interruption is resumed. And step by step despite occasional stumbling, he progresses steadily towards spiritual strength, propelled by the high sense of dedication to truth. While working at Wheatsylvania and at Nautilus Martin's idealism is challenged. He is faced with a number of crises when, doing the right thing he becomes unpopular.

The continual rejection from society makes Martin want to be successful. Working with Pickerbaugh he gets drawn into many societies. Called to make a speech about "what the laboratory teaches about Epidemics" at the Star of Hope Church Martin feels great excitement. The enthusiastic applause that he gets at the end of the speech makes him proud. And he stands in danger of following Pickerbaugh and his footsteps, but Leora's timely warning saves him. "You belong in a laboratory, finding out things not advertising them", she says.

And it is in the laboratory that the spends the rest of his life doing vital things Martin is a conscientious scientist who cares more for scientific truth than for fame. He goes over the results of his experiments very carefully and deliberately and does not hesitate to repeat the experiments endlessly. He is all the time an unconscious illustration of Max Gottlieb's theory of what a scientist ought to be. "To be a scientist—it is not just a different job, so that a man should choose between being a scientist and being an explorer or a bond-salesman or a physician or a king or a farmer. It is a tangle of very obscure emotions, like mysticism or wanting to write poetry : it makes its victim all different from the good normal man. The normal man, he does not care much

what he does except that he should eat and sleep and make love. But the scientist is intensely religious—he is so religious that he will not accept quarter truths, because they are an insult to his faith" Given his own laboratory at the Mc Gurk Institute, Martin's elation knows no bound. It is his sanctuary and within its walls he is filled with a noble passion and a love of humanity. Life in the laboratory is for Martin one of unadulterated bliss. Working on his experiments on certain staphylococcus germs that produce a blood-disintegrating toxin Martin works tirelessly. "With all his amateurish fumbling", Lewis tells us, "Martin had one characteristic without which there can be no science a wide-raging, sniffing, undignified, unselfdramatizing curiosity, and it drove him on." This curiosity is so important in a scientist that it eclipses all defects that he may have as a man. In Martin Arrowsmith there was no decorative heroism, no genius for amours, no exotic wit, no edifyingly borne misfortunes. He presented neither picturesque elegance nor moral message. He was full of hasty faults and of perverse honesty ; a young man often unkindly, often impolite. But he had one gift ; a curiosity whereby he saw nothing as ordinary. It is this curiosity that leads him to the discovery of the X-principle. Martin's thoroughness and his refusal to publish the results of his experiments before he is absolutely sure, meet with the disapproval of the institute's authorities. When it is learned that a French scientist has already published reports of his experiments conducted on similar lines, Martin's disappointment is great. But he is far too noble and open-minded to feel embittered. He reads the French scientist's report on Phage, his name for Martin's X—principle and exclaims in heart-felt admiration, "There's a man, there's a scientist."

Martin's humility is yet another asset in his scientific pursuit. He realises his limitations and though at first he resents the well-meaning criticism of Terry Wickett and Max Gottlieb, soon he musters enough moral courage to admit : "my physical chemistry is sick and my math rotten—what am I going to do ?" Terry comes to his rescue and teaches him algebra and calculus and physical chemistry and thus starts a comeradeship which helps Martin to realise ultimately his purpose in life. For, realising that life with Joyce has failed, inspite of their having a son, Martin goes to Terry, to his sanctuary in the Vermont woods. The close compas nionship and understanding that exist between the two scientist, may be guessed from their initial greeting of each other. "Hello-Terry, Come for keeps," calls out Martin to Terry, who is chopping wood. The reply that comes is "Fine, Slim Say, there's a lot dishes in the shack need washing." Naturally Martin cannot be drawn back to the world of Joyce, though she makes a strong attempt to do so. After sending Joyce away from Vermont, Martin turns to Terry with the words : "I feel as if I were really beginningl to work now. This new quinine stuff may prove pretty good. We'l

plug along on it for two or three years, and may be we'll get something permanent—and probably we'll fail."

Through the character of Martin, Lewis also attacks the fierce militarism of some of his countrymen. Martin does not have the enthusiasm of Holabird and others for war. The titles of Colonel, Major and Captain which thrill others fail to impress Martin. He protests vaguely at being herded into the army. The war is to him chiefly another interruption to his work, like Pickerbaughism, like earning his living at Wheatsylvania. He soon frets under the discomfort of wearing a uniform. His impatience with war does not mean that he is not patriotic. His patriotism is of a different type, however. He explains to Leora : "I want to be patriotic, but my patriotism is chasing antitoxins, doing my job, not wearing a particular kind of pants and a particular set of ideas about the Germans. On the island of St. Hubert, Martin is pleasantly surprised to see efficiency and intelligence in a negro doctor. After his meeting with Marchand, Martin feels dazed He says to himself, "I never thought a Negro doctor—I wish people wouldn't keep showing me how much I don't know."

It is on the island of St. Hubert that Martin has to undergo the greatest trials. Death on every side makes him ache with pity. But Max Gottlieb's influence and his own integrity prevent Martin from giving the phage to every body on the island. It is only after the death of Leora that Martin gives the phage to anyone who asks for it

Martin has plenty of faults that make his picture, one of a real human being. His frailties include, impulsiveness, and impatience. It was his most pitiful fault that he was not very kind to shy people and lonely people and stupid old people ; he was not cruel to them, he simply was unconscious of them or so impatient of their fumbling that he avoided them. Of course Leora taxes him with this. In self-defence Martin explains : "I'm too much absorbed in my work, or in doping stuff out, to waste time on morons. And it's a good thing......very few people have the courage to be decently selfish—not answer letters—and demand the right to work. If they had their way, these sentimentalists would've had Newton— yes, or probably a Christ !—going up everything they did for the world to address meetings and listen to the troubles of cranky old maids. Nothing takes so much courage as to keen hard and clear-headed." But Martin at times lacks this courage For the sake of Leora he is forcibly kind to all sorts of stray beggars for a while, but then sinks back into his absorption. This detached scientist is a bundle of contradictions. He loves his wife and is at times jealous of her having fun with other men, though he sincerely wants her to be happy. He is not altogether free from the superstitious fears that assail ordinary men. Walking alone through the darkness of the Mc Gurk buildings at night Martin feels shakily conscious of feet

padding behind him, of shapes which leered from doorways and insolently vanished, of ancient bodiless horrors, and to him the welcome electric lights bring relief and security.

Sinclair Lewis is one of the world's great novelists. His genius in satire and the art of novel writing has been universally acknowledged. His characters live for us, with all their foibles and assets. Martin Arrowsmith is sure to remain in the memory of all who are acquainted with the book *Arrowsmith* which Sinclair Lewis calls "the biography of a young man who was in no degree a hero, who regarded himself as a seeker after truth, yet who stumbled and slid back all his life and bogged himself in very obvious morass."

ERNEST HEMINGWAY (1898-1961)

Q. 96. Write an essay on Hemingway as a novelist.

Or

Account for the eminent place that Hemingway occupies among twentieth century American novelists.

Or

Discussing chief features of Hemingway's novels and evaluate Hemingway's contribution as a novelist.

Ans. 1 Introduction

Ernest Hemingway, a major novelist of America, is the 'spokesman of the last generation' of American writers which included writers like William Faulkner, Scott Fitzgerald, John Don Passos and Sinclair Lewis. These writers, including Ernest Hemingway, tried to show the loss the First World War had caused in social, moral and psychological spheres of human life. They also reveal the horror, the fear and the futility caused by the war. Hemingway has put into his novels the precise feelings, longings and furstrations that are typical of the lost generation. He is a typical modern man voicing the dilemma and delusion of the modern man.

2. His Major Works

Heminway has written beautiful short stories. But he is more popular as a novelist. His most well known novels are *In Our Times*, *The Torrents of Spring*, *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), *A Farewell to Arms* (1928), *Death in the Afternoon* (1932), *Greenhills of Africa* (1935), *To Have and Have Not* (1937), *The Fifth Column* (1938), *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940), *Across the River and into the Trees* (1950), and *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952). However, the most popular of these are *A Farewell to Arms*, *The Old Man and the Sea* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls.*

3. Major Influences

Mark Twain, the War, and the Bible were the major influences that shaped Hemingway's thought and art. While in Paris, Hemingway came into contact with such eminent literary figures as Fitzgerald, Ezra Pound. Ford Madox Ford, D. H. Lawrence, James Joyce and even T. S. Eliot. All or some of them might have left their imprint on him. Besides these contemporary journalism and the style of *The Star* (the paper for which Hemingway worked) also helped him to purge his style of stereotyped phrases and metaphoric embellishments. He learnt to use the simplest possible words for producing the desired effect. Hemingway's earlier writings are in imitation of Ring Lardner's style who was

a popular writer in Hemingway's school days. Hemingway has also acknowledged to have learnt a good deal from Joseph Conrad's writings. He says that he would resurrect Conrad by sprinkling the powdered T. S. Eliot on the former's grave. We notice a conspicuous parallel between Hemingway's *My Old Man* and Sherwood Anderson's *I Want to Know*, but Hemingway has denied that he borrowed from the latter.

4. His Plots

The plots of Hemingway's novels and stories are remarkably simple. Except *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (in which social and political forces are introduced to play important roles in the destiny of main characters) all other novels of Hemingway have strikingly simple plots. They are mainly concerned with one or two major characters, their ordeals, their disappointments and frustrations and their sturggle to achieve some measure of dignity. They reveal the wounds and sufferings of the major figures. They are full of suspense and interest for the readers.

The Sun Also Rises is the story of a young American ambulance driver on the Italian-Austrian during the First World War. The hero here is Jack Barnes, a young man who is emasculated in the war. The action of the book is taken up with drinking, fishing, going to the bull fights and so on, but the story does not lead one anywhere, and that is the effect that the novelist strove to convey; for Jack and the people with whom he associates are the amusing but aimless people who have been rudely plucked out of their normal sphere of activities, by the war, those who were typical of the lost generation.

In *The Farewell to Arms*, we have the story of another American brutally handled by Fate and War. Lt. Frederick Henry is wounded in the war and while recuperating in Milan, he falls in love with an English nurse, he returns to the front but soon deserts the army for which he has nearly sacrificed his life and escapes to Switzerland with Catherine Barkley, the English nurse, who carries his child. Catherine dies while delivering the child, and Henry, bidding farewell to arms of the war and the arms of his beloved return desolate.

For Whom the Bell Tolls is the story of another American volunteer in the Spanish civil war named Robert Jordan. He is sent to join a guerrilla band in the mountains near Segovia to blow up a strategic bridge to facilitate a Loyalist advance. He spends three days and nights with the guerillas and while in their camp falls in love with Maria. He fulfills his duty and destroys the bridge. He is wounded in the retreat and is lift to die.

The Old Man and the Sea depicts the heroism of a Cuban fisherman Santiago who ventures into the deep sea, alone and succeeds in hooking a huge marlin. He struggles with the fish

and after two days and nights of hunger and hard fight, he rows it towards the shore. The sharks set upon his prize and after a futile struggle with them, Santiago, half dead with exhaustion tows home the skeleton of the fish, the biggest marlin ever baited there.

A learned critic has chracterized Hemingway's plots as cyclic. But the definition is not comprehensive. In cyclic plot no insight is obtained in the course of the action. The fact is that Hemingway's plots are not so much cylcic as spiratic, that is to say, the hero does not accomplish anything materially but obtains an insight into his own identity and passes on the unique experience to the world. The main character gains in status and stature in the course of the novel.

5. Hemingway's Themes

The main theme of Hemingway is death and wound. He deals with the impact and tragedy caused by the First World War. Edward Wagenknecht in his book *The Cavalcade of the American Novel* says that Hemingway has been taken in by war, violence and death. "He made an art out of killing. He has killed like a highly sensitive, pitiful, civilized man who feels himself under a terrible compulsion to kill because something has gone wrong in his thinking. He has been taken in by these things far more completely than any sentimental old maid of the friendship village school was taken in by the moonlight and the roses."

Hemingway has grappled with the suffering, shock and pain of the modern man. The love of violence and the wound and death in his special predilection which manifested itself in his various manly pursuits, his career as a soldier, his love of boxing and hunting, and love for bullfights. His art is most autobiographical and bears the impress of his personality, his problem of adjustment with the world.

Hemingway's novels bear witness to the author's strange preoccupations with death. The world of his novels is a world at war where the figure of death looms large. Rober Spiller observes that Hemingway had but a single theme how men may meet death in a world stripped of all values except of intensity. Hemingway, in his preoccupation with death was like many great writers of America, for it has been pointed out that an obsession with evil, early sorrow and death appears astonishingly native to the American muse. Behind Hemingway's reflections on death lurks suspicion of ultimate doom. This has engendered in him a passionate fondness for being alive. The writer of Ecclesiastes has repeatedly remarked that extinction may well be the end of all, and this thought only arouses in Hemingway and his heroes, a desire to live each moment properly and skilfully Jack Barnes says "May be if you found out how to live in it you learned from

that what it was all about." This attitude to life is responsible for the existentialists' fondness in Hemingway. Most of the characters of Hemingway seem to be poised on the edge of nothingness, the abyss of non-meaning. The only ray of hope is that provided by individual human courage. Dying well for Hemingway was a crucial corollary to living well The great heroes of Hemingway show extraordinary fortitude even while on the point of death. In one of his short stories Hemingway puts these words about Christ in the mouth of a Roman Soldier : "he looked pretty good to me in there today." The unique courage of the figure on the cross seems to have haunted Hemingway from the beginning of his literary career till the very end. Like the Elizabethan writers whom he very much admired Hemingway never lets us quite forget that death awaits everyone, at some turns, not far along the way. And Hemingway also reminds us that it is our "performance en route" that counts for good or bad.

6. His Realism

Hemingway is a realist and naturalist. He adheres to fidelity to life. He believed that a novelist should depict 'the actual'. He pictures his own experiences based on real observations and realizations. He enters into contemporary problems caused by the First World War. His events are real, characters real, and dialogues real. There is life-likeness in his novels. But his realism is studded with symbolism.

7. His Symbolism

Hemingway uses symbols in his novels. Jack Barnes' war-woundedness (in *The Sun Also Rises*) is a symol for the whole atmosphere of barrenness and meaninglessness of life. In *A Farewell to Arms*, the mountains are associated with the concept of home and security, peace and health, whereas the plains connote the concept of 'not-home', filth and fatigue, war and death. Rain is also used as a symbol for death and destruction. In *Whom the Bell Tolls*, snow is used as a symbol of death. A spring snowfall increases the danger of Hordan's mission and indirectly contributes to his death. The three sinister Fascist planes and the hawk also stand for death. In *The Old Man and the Sea*, the symbolism has a far deeper singificance than in the early novels. The book is a representation of life as a struggle against unconquerable natural forces in which a kind of victory is possible. Santiago's message is that while a man may grow old and lose his luck, he can still dare stick to the rules, keep on striving even in the teeth of opposition and thus makes his failure a thing to be proud of, a kind of victory. The theme of *The Old Man and the Sea* is : "What a man can do and what a man endures." The second concern of the novel is man's dependence upon his fellowmen. The third concern in the novel is that of man's oneness

with nature. The sea and the wonderful creatures on the sea instil into the old man a sense of man's smallness. The symbolism of the crucifixion is also used in the book. Santiago has been interpreted as symbolic of St James and St. Francis. The humility of the old man and his compassion for the living things of the sea emphasize the basic Christian symbolism. The boy Monolin also serves as a symbol of hope, faith and promise of the future.

8. Hemingway's Style

Hemingway will be remembered for his distinct style. In his case, the style is the man. His style, says Louis Untermeyer, is "hard, clean, close-clipped, persistently masculine ; his very adjectives are appropriately, even aggressively, athletic and accurate." There was a certain magic about the style that gave to common idioms and familiar phrases a new significance. "Hemingway's words," says the famvous novelist Ford Madox Ford, "strike you, each one, as if they were pebbles fetched fresh from a brook. They live and shine, each in its place."

"The reader is swept on by the swift progress of Hemingway's prose, the chocked eloquence and damned-up emotions, which like rocks in a river, make the torrent flow more excitedly. Rarely has there been so sharp a focus on things seen and touched and cherished and lost ; seldom has there been a greater justification of passing time and its grim relentlessness. Never in American writing has there been so dramatic a conflict of bitterness and brilliance, incredible failures and unquestionable successes, physical ecstasy, intellectual exacerbation, shocking violence and lasting vitality."

His prose is 'clean'; it has a claim for renown and permanence. It is for the most part colloquial, characterized by a deliberate simplicity of diction and sentence structure. He aims at clipped, curt statements, even understatements. He is avowedly 'non-literary' His style is shaped by the Bible and a newspaper of Kansas city, *The Star* whose handbook on style became a model book for Hemingway. It directed him to stick to the qualities of writing which he had already discovered for himself : "Use short sentences. Use short praragraphs. Use vigorous English. Be positive, not negative. Avoid the use of adjectives especially such extravagant ones 'splendid', 'gorgeous', 'grand', 'magnficent'. Hemingway was very much indebted to these rules and said : "Those were the best rules I ever learned for the business of writing."

Archibald Macleish says that Hemingway "whittled a style." Some remarkable qualities of his style are—conversational tone, strictest objectivity in writing (the author remains deliberately in the background, never thrusting himself forward),. suggestiveness and simplicity.

"The simplicity of Hemingway's style......is not the simplicity of Sherwood Anderson, so little removed from childishness but a simylicity that has passed through the sophisticated criticism of Gertrude Stein, the simplicity of an analytical mind that has deliberately rejected complexity as a method. It seems simple because it is stripped and transparent but it is packed with cumulative suggestion revealing depth within depth that may be overlooked on a first reading." (Edgar Johnson).

Hemingway's prose is not merely what it appears at the face of it. There is more behind it. By employing the technique of symbolism, irony and allusion to connote meanings that are not visible on the surface, Frederic Henry's experience becomes the experience of the entire American nation during the First World War. Likewise, Santiago's experience is the sturggle of the human species against Nature which is kind at time and mysteriously cruel at others. The talk of the ignorant tourists at the end of the novel entitled *The Old Man and the Sea* implies that outsiders cannot understand and appreciate what Santiago has achieved and what his hard won trophy of a marlin signified. The particular scene pictured in the novel *A Farewell to Arms* wherein Henry is shown as emptying his glass on a burning log of wood to pour whisky into it for his drink, thereby killing hundreds of aunts untimely even though they were all bound to perish in any case, becomes a symbol of humanity caught between the devil and the deep sea. Death is the ultimate end and there is no exit.

"Hemingway will certainly be remembered as a stylist. His short, concrete sentences, his lively dialogue and his desperate search for the exact word which will express and exact and limited truth are landmarks in the twenteith-century fiction. His prose-rhythms have transformed the staccato rattle of his early writings, into the liquid, cadenced, ripple of some of his later works. To this bare style he also brings his gifts as a poet. He is extremely sensitive to the light, colour, form, and atmosphere of particular places. He succeeds admirably in suggesting an emotional atmosphere. His ability to transfer what he feels and thinks on to paper is superb."

9. The Strain of Romanticism

Hemingway represents more than any other writer of the modern world. 'He is modern man driven by a warring world to survive in himself. He is the existential battler, the knight in the turtle-necked sweater, who has discovered the ultimate romance in fighting hopeless odds among the ashes of our temples. This evaluation of Hemingway by his biographer Sheridan Baker has much truth. One remarkable aspect of Hemingway is that inspite of all ruggedness and the veneer of hardness, he is at heart a romantic In *A Farewell to Arms* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, this romantic streak comes to the forefront. The story of

Frederic Henry fighting in the First World War and falling in love with Catherine, has the making of a romantic tragedy. Henry is an architectural student in Italy. He joins the Italian ambulance corps because of his fluent Italian. He meets a Scotch nurse of the British Voluntary Aid Detachment, Catherine Barkley. They are drawn to each other and the feeling ripens into ove when Henry is wounded by an explosion of a mortar shell. Catherine nurses him and their love grows. She becomes pregnant and Henry returns to the front just in time for the Italian retreat. He barely escapes death and in civilian clothes, he joins Catherine in the Alps from which they scape to Switzerland, rowing all night across a stormy lake. Catherine is admitted into the hospital where her baby is delivered dead. She too dies and Henry walks back to the hotel, alone in the rain, which represents the utter bleakness of his world. Henry's love has been the romantic glow in a world that has grown utterly bereft of light. The juxtaposition of a tender love story, doomed to end in tragedy and the horrors of war has been a very successful idea.

The unfortunate love story of Maria and Robert Jordan in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is told with equal tenderness Jordan, an instructor in Spanish at the University of Montana is on leave in Spain for the academic year 1936-1937. He throws himself into the struggle of the Loyalists of Spain against the Fascists and is entrusted with a very dangerous mission. He meets Maria, an innocent, loving girl and falls in love with her. Jordan's love is made intense by his awareness that it is doomed to be short in duration. For his task is to blow up a bridge behind enemy lines in broad daylight. He is fully aware of the possibility of failure and indeed he dies in the attempt. Hemingway has put a lot of tenderness into the portrayal of these unhappy lovers. He has even attributed to them 'a touch of that coy twinship' that he has given to Frederic Henry and Catherine of *Farewell to Arms*. This similarity and strange twinship have marked the lovers in romances from most ancient times. Repeatedly this is stressed in the novel. For instance Pilar tells them : "You could be brother and sister by the look. But I believe it is fortunate that you are not". The tender pathos of Hemingway's stories is appreciated by a world that despite its show of rugged cynicism, has still a soft corner for romance and a hankering after tenderness, all the more because these seem to be lacking in the war-torn world. He has depicted also the havoc of war, the devastation, and the wrecking of human life and happiness that war entails.

Hemingway's idealism has been also a very endearing aspect of his. There seems to be sense of dedication to a cause in many of his heroes especially Jordan committed hopelessly to a lost cause. Jordan comes to Spain as soon as the war has started and

claims to have "fought that summer and that fall for all the poor in the world, against all tyranny, for all the things you believed and for the new world you had been educated into." The world he has fought for is a world where the 'havenot's do not exist for all will be happy.' This idealism is given clear expression to by these words of Jordan : "You're not a real Marxist and you know it. You believe in Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. You believe in Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness. Don't ever kid yourself with too much dialectics. They are for some but not for you. You have to know them in order not to be a sucker. You have put many things in abeyance to win a war. If this war is lost all of those things are lost." It is significant that Hemingway borrows the title of this great novel from a passage in Donne, emphasising the essential kinship of human beings, their involvement with one another. This indissoluble tie or kinship of the race leads us, as Hemingway makes it clear in his work, to the conclusion that the loss of freedom anywhere means the loss of freedom everywhere. The gospel of life dedicated to a noble cause and the idea of sacrifice form the basis of the novel. This is what makes the book of gripping interest to all readers, even to those who have no interest in the historical aspect of the Spanish War. The political situation does not matter. What matters is the spirit of the whole work, the splendid evocation of the scenes and the magnificent characterisation. This is what Alfred Kazin has pointed out in his work *On Native Grounds*, where he says that Hemingway's portrait of the Spanish War "was less a study of the Spanish people than a study of epic courage and compassion. The idealism that had always been so frozen in inversion, so gnawing and self-mocking had now become an unabashed lyricism that enveloped the love of Robert Jordan and Maria, the strength of Pilar, the courage and devotion of the guerillas, the richness and wit of Spanish speech, in a hymn of fellowship." Here the message of Hemingway emerges as something strong and positive. No wonder such eminent writers as Clifton Fadiman, Sinclair Lewis, and Sterling North declared *For Whom the Bell Tolls* as the American novel that "most clearly approaches the stature of a classic."

10 His Contribution

It has been said of Hemingway that 'half the young writers tried to imitate him and the other half tried not to." He enjoyed tremendous popularity. He was "the spokesman of the lost generation." He brought vigour and fresh life to American novel. He won not only several prizes for his valour but also the Nobel Prize for literature and the Committee which recommended him the prize praised his style.

His major contribution to the Twentieth-century fiction is his creation of heroes like Santiago and Henry and the cuban-fisher-

man hero of *The Old Man and the Sea*, who have a tireless zeal to live life and face the sufferings and diffiultics of life despite heavy odds and defeat. Further more, his use of the colloquial speech for literary purpose, his love of danger, his deliberate courting of risky adventure, his bull fights and incredible heroism in war, his strong and forceful and fresh style, his blend of the romantic and the realistic sides of life, his easy and simple symbolism also place him among the major nevelists of America.

Perhaps we get a clue to the secret of Hemingway's enduring popularity in this analysis by Sheridan Baker. "And because we all respond to the romantic dream of embattled self, which is at the centre of Hemingway's best work, Hemingway will continue to be read and will continue, in his way, to be great. He has found, in himself, our own soft romantic centre, our sweet dream of depair and toughened it into bravery. He has caught man's essential nagging belief—aggravated by a nihilistic, skeptical and uncertain period—that we do not get all we deserve, that we are made for something better than brutality and death, that our virtues ought to be rewarded by some supreme and deathless love and by some-grandeur that neither the rubble of two wars nor the glitter of the suburbs can supply."

Hemingway is the apostle of the faith that is lost, the faith that had already begun to erode by the middle of the nineteenth century. He is the American expression of the British Henley who wrote :

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

Q. 97. Comment on the Hemingway Hero.

Ans. Heroes of Hemingway are of two types : the Hemingway hero who is the protagonist and the code hero. Whereas the Hemingway hero proper is young and inexperienced, lost and bewildered in a world devoid of values, the code hero is usually an older man who has realised the potentialities and known the field of his operations. The Code Hero is usually a professional man—a bull-fighter, a fisherman, a soldier and a prize-fighter. He is confident to excel in the field of his choice and has indomitable courage and inexhaustible endurance.

Hemingway's Hero proper is an honest and robust young man; he is highly sensitive ; he is an outdoor male ; he has courage and spirit to live and relive the life in its full. But his hero proper is a wounded man; he is wounded both physically and mentally. In his short story Nick Adams has been wounded in the First World War.

In *A Farewell to Arms*, Frederic Henry, the hero is also a wounded man In *The Sun Also Rises*, Jake Barnes, the hero is wounded in the war. In *The Fifth Column*, Philip (the hero) suffers with in somnia and horrors. In *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Robert Jordan (the hero) is fighting as an American volunteer in the Spanish War and is the wounded man. In his another novel *Across the River and into the Trees*, Richard Cantwell is a colonel. This is so because Hemingway himself was a war hero.

His heroes treat sex as a game of joy ; there is absence of true love in many cases. His heroes are not thinkers but men of action like Hemingway himself. Wyndham Lewis writes that the Hemingway hero is a "dull-witted, bovine, monosyllabic simpleton" who speaks with "the voice of the folk" In the words of Sean O'Faolin, the Hemingway hero is "brainless" ; he "has no past, no traditions and no memories."

Some common estimates, which are indeed quostionable, of his heroes are that these heroes lack inwardness ; they are bull-fighters, hunters, soldiers and fishermen with autobiographical traits. The heroes have physical and emotional injuries. They are not patriots, but they have formed their own code of conduct and made a separate peace. They have adjusted themselves to the outward reality. They move out of America. Nick Adams moves from the peaceful life at home into the war-torn region of Europe. Jack Barnes, an American, is in Paris and Spain. Frederic Henry, again an American, is fighting in an Italian army to serve a cause of which he has no clear idea or understanding.

Most of the Hemingway heroes have a kind of common childhood in which they have witnessed Negroes being lynched. Indians leading a beastial, sub-human life and their fathers have somehow betrayed them by committing suicide. The only justification for their existence is their outdoor life. The snow-covered slopes, where they skit is the symbol of freedom that they seek in their lives. The delight fishing sometimes serves to dispel their fears of bodily injuries that they have suffered and that keep their minds gripped. They drink heavily to overcome the anxiety that torments their hearts. They seek the company of women sometimes for itself and sometimes as a lever to some nobler object.

"Hemingway's heroes have power of endurance, strength and valour. They live in a world of nightmare where as his other charácter devitalized by war and wounded live in a world which is grim. They have the overtones of the Nietzschean superman" (Moloney). In them there is a triumph of instinctive urges over reason. They are guided by anti-thought.

The Code Hero

Where as the hero in Hemingway is 'the tyro', the code hero is the 'tutor'. The former is young and inexperiencd, lost and con-

fused, the latter is usually an older man who has become what he had to become. He has realised the potentialities and know the area of his operation. The Code hero is not Hemingway himself as the Hemingway hero was. He is known as code hero because he represents a code according to which the hero, if he coul attain it, would be able to live properly in the world of violence, disorder, and misery. The code hero, then,offers us and exemplifies certain principles of honour, courage, and endurance which in a life of tension and pain make a man, as we say, and enable him to conduct himself well in the losing battle that is life. He shows, in Hemingway's famous phrase for it, "grace under pressure."

Some of his famous code heroes are Jake in "Fighty Grand" (short story). Manual in "The Uudefeated" (short story), Wilson in *The Short Happy Life of Francis is Mocomber*, Cayetano in *The Gambler*, Harry Morgan in *To Have and Have Not* Frederic Henry in *A Farewell to Arms*, and Santiago, the finest and best known of these code heroes in *The Old Man and the Sea*.

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Q. 98. Write a note on Hemingway's Female characters.

Ans Hemingway's women are born out of his own experiences and observations of women he had met and come in contact in his own life. In this respect it is said that he was influenced by his mother and the Indian girls in Norther Michigan whom he knew intimately. Some of his famous women characters are Maria (*For Whom the Bell Tolls*), Renata (*Across the River and into the Tree*). Catherine Barkley and Miss Ferguson (*A Farewell to Arms*), and Mary (*The Snows of Kilimanjaro*).

His heroines have been called "amoeba-like" by Edmund Wilson They are, to quote Lelie Fielder, "mindless soft servient... animal or things They are flippant in love ; many of them are just flirts, some prostitutes. They are not true or sincere in love. They are women without men." A few heroines have manliness. But Barkley in *A Farewell* has faminine charms and is a symbol of sincerity and love. She has been idealised. She is not domineering and always submissive. Maria in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* resembles Catherine in her devotion, submission and love She is an affirmative womanly woman. Both these are beautiful, loyal and loving women. In his women Hemingway was dictated by what happened when war ceased, and how there was a disillusionment in true love.

There are, broadly speaking, three types of women in the works of Hemingway. Those who are simply enjoyable and have some sex appeal (Maria, Renata, etc.). They are young girls and symbolise the romantic day-dreams of Hemingway heroes. They

are exciting ; exquisitely charming beauties, most obliging and docile ready to serve The second important type of female character that is met with in Hemingway's fiction is a virtual bith. She is absolutely devoid of morality. She is a domineering type who wants to keep the male under her thumb. She wants to remain free herself but would not countenance similar freedom in the male. For example, Bett Ashley in *The Sun Also Rises*, Mrs. Morgot Macomber in *The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber*. The third type of women in his novels are the benovlent, elderly women like Pilar in *For Whom the Bells Tolls*.

"A parallel has been traced between Hemingway and Kipling in the portrayal of women. Kipling believes that he travels faster who travels alone and the female of the species is more deadly than the male. Hemingway seems to have endorsed this weighty judgement of Kipling and modelled most of his desirable heroiness accordingly. They are either British, or Spanish, or Italian, and seldom do they belong to the American community. Of course, they conduct themselves perfectly as mistresses, and their existence is justified only in terms of their service to their lord. They have no independent existence, because their entity and identity is thoroughly merged with that of the hero."

Hemingway's women have also been called "wish projections," "dream girls", "romantic ideals of wife-hood". They are not idealisations but realities born out of the necessities of situations.

Q. 99. Write a critique of Hemingway's "A Farewell to Arms".

Answer. 1. Introduction

A Farewell to Arms, a tragedy, published in 1929, spread the fame of its author. This novel, like other works of Hemingway, depicts the human predicament, despair and disillusionment of man. Hemingway has heightened the tragic effects of the novel with him irony and symbolism. When he prepared the first draft the events of his life influenced the tone of the work. His second son was delivered in Kansas city by Caesarean operation of his wife, his father killed himself. In his love affairs too he had both happy and unhappy experiences.

2. Main Events of the Novel

The novel is a story of an intense love-affair between Ferderic Henry, an American volunteer serving in the Italian army, and Catherine Barkley an English nurse. Henry and Barkley are like Romeo and Juliet. The novel creates an atmosphere of war in which the hero Frederic Henry has been injured, and admitted

into the hospital in Milan where he develops intimacy with Barkley. The third part of the book portrays the defeat and the retreat of the Italin forces......at Caporetto. Frederic and Barkley have been living as husband and wife. Henry is fed up with the war and suspected to be a German spy. He deserts the army to escape the presentation of the Ital an police. Barkley has left nursing and is pregnant. Both of them have run away to Switzerland, a neutral country, to live in peace, but the tragedy overwhelms him with grief when Barkley dies in childbirth, and Henry is the sole spectator of the tragedy. The subject-matter has been built upon ironical contrast between the sacred and the unsacred love.

The love theme is the main story. Catherine discloses to him the fact of being pregnant. But she will not marry him for fear of being sent back to England. Henry returns to his post, finds his Comrade Rinaldi depressed by the monstrous horrors of war and shares the sufferings during the disastrous retreat from Caporetta. He deserts, learns that Catherine has been transferred to Stresa, and joins her there. Although he is in civilian clothes, he is suspected and forced to flee with Catherine to Switzerland. They had rowed there in a boat. On landing, however, they were arrested, but later on released. Henry told the police that he was a sportsman and loved to row. Both had valid passports. Hence they were let off.

Near the delivery time, Catherine was admitted into a hospital. She had difficult time and the doctors used anaesthesia. After a lot of pain she delivered a dead child. After sometime Catherine also died of brain hammorrhage. She in fact died in his arms. Henry had no one to talk to and quietly walked into the dark. The events in the novel are described with sincerity and integrity. There is austere realism and brutal details of its tragic end, they have a peculiar poignancy rarely met with in other works of fiction. In this novel by killing Catherine in childbirth Hemingway perhaps reconciled himself to the loss of Agnes H. Von Kurovsky who had refused to marry him even though she had promised earlier to do so.

Thus war and peace (love) are the main themes of *A Farewell to Arms.* Hemingway rightly described this work as his *Romeo and Juliet.* Like Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* is also a tragic love story. In it only the heroine dies but the hero lives with a scar of war. Like the feud of the two families in *Romeo and Juliet* the prevailing war is a blight that is partly responsible for the death of Catherine.

3. Plot and Theme

The theme of *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) is farewell to the arms (weapons) of war and the arms (hands) of the beloved. It is a

novel of love and war. Like Hemingways other novels this novel also depicts the human predicament, despair and disillusionment of man. The plot of the novel has been constructed on the dramatic lines. The first part of the book sets the stage beautifully for the tragedy. The appropriate background of the war has been created through the delineation of the climatic conditions, weather, the mountains and the plains. The first part pictures the war, and Frederic Henry and Catherine Barkley meet each other and their love and intimacy increases. Frederic, an American volunteer serving in the Italian ambulance has been wounded in his leg, and Barkley is serving as a nurse in the hospital in which Henry is admitted. In Book II, love between the hero and heroine is the central theme. There are clergymen and doctors. Catherine is afraid of death in rain and Frederic also is terrified by the thought of death. He goes to the front, and it is learnt that the Austrains are to launch their attack. The Third Book takes us to Caporetto. The Austrian soldiers have reached Caporetto and carried their reckless destruction. There is a final retreat. Henry has been suspected to be a German spy, and he wants to desert army to escape the torments of the Italians. In the Fourth Book, Henry goes to meet Catherine at Stresa. He is united with her, but the war has not ended. They have migrated to Switzerland. In the Fifth Book, Catherine undergoes a Caesarean operation, and a dead child is born resulting in her death. Henry is the sole survivor who is left in despair and disillusoionment with scars of war-wounds on him. Thus the novel has been neatly divided into five books and each one of them marks a certain stage of development of the story.

The two plots, one concerning love an the other dealing with war are beautifully interwoven in the novel. Henry's involvement in war and love are simultaneous. There is no superfluous matter in the novel ; everthing has been built in a compact manner. The novel is like a classical tragedy; it has a beginning, a middle and an end. The novel is a tragedy. Hemingway called it his *Romeo and Juliet*.

4. The Title of the Novel

The title of the novel "A Farewell to Arms" has been borrowed from a poem of an Elizabethan poet, George Peele. The poem is addressed to Queen Elizabeth, and in the poem an old knight bids goodbye to arms and takes to prayer. By the end of this novel the hero of the novel, Frederic Henry, also bids farewell to arms, to war, and returns without love, his beloved being dead, perhaps only to seek refuge in the prayers to God (But this has not been properly suggested by the novelist). Not only the hero but also the Italian soldiers bid goodbye to the war and throw away their rifles thinking that if they threw away their rifles nobody could make them fight. There is a fierce criticism of war throughout the novel.

5. Symbolism and Naturalism

A Farewell to Arms is a judicious blend of naturalism and symbolism. Hemingway has not only portrayed war, death, sex, love and religion, but has also intensified the effects of his writings through his use of symbols and ironies. Carlos Baker has analysed the central theme of *A Farewell to Arms* in terms of the Mountain and the Plain. Mountains are symbolic of dryness and comfort, whereas the plain represents the rain and the fog The Home concept, for example, is associated with the mountains, with dry, cold weather, with peace and quiet, with love, dignity, health, happiness and the good life; and with worship or at least the consciousness of God. The Not-Home concept is associated with the low plains, with rain and fog, with obscenity, indignity, disease, suffering nervousness, war and death, and with irreligion. (Carlos Baker. *Hemingway: the Writer as Artist*).

Malcolm Cowley has rightly commented that Hemingway belongs to the company of "Poe and Hawthorne and Melville; the haunted and nocturnal writers, the men who deal in images that were symbols of an inner world." Caroline Gordon has even compared Hemingway to Kalfka as a symbolist.

Rain has also been used as a symbol. Everytime there is disaster, whether consciously or unconsciously, it is accompanied by rain. When Henry is wounded, there is a threat of rain. When there is retreat, there is rain. When Henry and Catherine separate in Milan, there is a gusty wind accompanied by rain. The lovers' escape from Stresa across the lake is in rain; Henry leaves Catherine in the hospital in rain. So rain is the symbol of human misery and disaster. Frederic Henry himself is the Everyman of America after the First World War; his experience of war is a common experience of the Americans.

Naturalism and realism of Hemingway can be seen in the story, the theme, the characterization, and the language of the novel. Above all it is in the biological trapping of the hero and the heroine. According to Ray B. West. Jr. (see his article 'Biological Trap'), Henry and Catherine both have been biologically trapped by the war, by their love, and by death. This biological trap reminds us of the element of determinism and pessimism in the naturalistic fiction. The death of the heroine takes place because of some biological defect and not because of any supernatural intervention.

6. Autobiographical Element

Hemingway has incorporated his personal experience as a war soldier in the First World War in *A Farewell to Arms*. His protagonist Henry has much of Hemingway. He himself like his Henry suffered a leg injury in the war and was sent to Milan for treatment and recovery. It was in the Milan hospital that he fell in love with

a young American nurse Agnes H. Kurowsky whom he has painted in the novel as Catherine Barkley. The silver medal that Henry gets is the same as Hemingway got for the courageous role he played in saving an Italian who was wounded during the offensive. The descriptions of the Italian retreat were born out of his own observations of the retreat. Like Catherine, Hemingway's wife Pauline also had to undergo a Caesarean operation. Henry's and Catherine's visit to Switzerland is also born out of his personal experience. for after his first marriage Hemingway too had gone to Switzerland with his first wife and son. The whole of the Italian scenery where the action takes place is known to Hemingway like the palm of his hand. But the novel is not a pure autobiography ; Hemingway has followed an objective method for presenting subjective experience and has made his accounts more beautiful with his imagination and artistic gifts.

7. Philosophical & Religious Content

Critics have found philosophy and religion in *A Farewell to Arms*. As mentioned by Wagenknecht, "Hemingway never wanted to write about everyday life—the poor. dear, foolish life that Howells loved so much. Instead, he wanted to concern himself with the ultimate crises of human experience, to surprise the human soul (if there was a soul) naked as it faced upto an ultimate challenge. In this case—in this unceasing pre-occupation with the problems of conduct—it must be admitted that those admirers are right who discern in him a profoundly 'moral' writer."

Frederic, the hero does not love God, but he is afraid of him in the night sometimes. He and Catherine cannot find sanctuary in the church. Frederic is worried when the newborn child is dead and has not been baptized. Henry's attitude towards religion is the modern man's attitude to religion.

According to James F Light, the novel has experimented with four ideals of service. "The orthodox religious ideal of service is that of the priest, who wishes to serve God but who asserts as well as the broader concept of service : 'when you love you wish to do things for. You wish to sacrifice for. You wish to serve' Another ideal of service is that of patriot Gino who wishes to serve his country so fully that he is willing to die for it. For him the Italian soil is sacred and death is a reward. The third ideal is the code of Catherine Barkley which is that of selfless secular love. She serves her lover and in such service she realises her personal substitute for conventional religion. Henry has learnt the priest's ideal to serve without any return in exchange. The last ideal is that of the surgeon, Dr. Rinaldi, who as a doctor wishes to serve mankind by alleviating the wounds of war.

Nevertheless in moments of despair Hemingway has poised on the edge of nothingness, just as the existentialists. Anguish is

a universal phenomenon. Like the existentialists Hemingway also believes that in the face of ultimate doom and extinction, one must live each moment properly and skilfully. Thus in 'A Farewell to Arms' there are echoes of existentialism also.

8. Atmosphere of 'A Farewell to Arms'

The atmosphere of the novel is that of doom and pessimism. It is a tragic novel set against the background of war. War is a horrible game which shatters all civilized ideals and harmonious ties and entails misery nd pain The love of Henry and Catherine seems ill-starred ; they are unable to marry ; at last Catherine dies. The mystery of death hangs over the novel from the beginning to the end. In the First Book Henry is wounded ; he is almost dead. In Book II we are introduced to Catherine's fear of death. She is afraid of the rain because she sometimes sees herself dead in it. In Book III there is an indication that Frederic is very little different from Catherine in his fear of death. At his back he alweys hears Time's winged chariot hurrying near. We see death face to face in Book V. So the atmosphere of sorrow and death, of gloom and pessimism hangs over the novel. The following hart-rending speech of Henry Frederic on Catherine's last breath would make our contention properly proved :

> "I know she was going to die and I prayed she would not. Don't let her die. Oh, God, please don't let her die. I'll do anything for you if you won't let her die. Please, please, please, dear God don't let her die. Dear God, don't let die. Please, please, please don't let her die. God please make her not die I'll do anything you say if you don't let her die. You took the baby but don't let her die. That was all right, but don't let her die. Please, please, dear God, Don't let her die."

9. Style and Language

Halliday says Hemingway's style in remarkable for ambiguity, symbolism and irony. It is also remarkable for its manliness and simplicity. Irony can be seen in the remarks of characters. During the retreat the author comments ironically on the stupidity and chaos of war. The irony is in the fact that Henry is serving in the ambulance to help and transport the wounded soldiers, but he himself has received the wound. He carries on his love-affair in the hospital when the soldiers are fighting on the battle field. He is physically healthy but lacks the will power. He has sought a life of sensations and joy and has indulged in sexual pleasures, yet he is gloomy. The style is forceful, language easy and simple. He has cultivated a colloquial style characterized by a deliberate simplicity of diction and sentence structure. Words strike him as if they were pebbles from a brook. His is a laconic prose. He aimed at clipped, curt statements.

10. Characterization

The most important and lively characters are Henry and Catherine. In the beginning Henry is full of enthusiasm and joins the war as a volunteer. But after receiving the wound, he is obsessed by death and gloom and meaninglessness of the world. He is the Hemingway hero with the physical injury and the emotional wound. He is alienated from his family and is completely engrossed in the war. But he suffers both in war and love. He is at the end a disillusioned figure.

Catherine Barkley is a woman imbued with idealism and womanly virtues. In her passionate love and faithfulness, she is a symbol of consistency and constancy. She is a woman of taste and refinement. She is Hemingway's woman idealized.

Q. 100. Write a critical appreciation of Hemingway's 'For Whom the Bell Tolls'.

Ans. *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is the culmination of Hemingway's creative genius. It is the story of another lost man, Robert Jordan. It is the novel which is symbolic of individual's collective failure. The story shows the conflict between the Republicans and the Fascists aided by the volunteers sent by Mussoline. The central action of the novel hinges on the blowing of a bride. Robert Jordan has been entrusted with this task so that the Fascists may be prevented from attacking the Republicans Robert is pitted against his enemy with the support of the Spanish Guerillas led by Pablo. At last Jordan blows up the bridge and guards the post. He has been mortally wounded lies down in the pine wood. The sub-plot develops Robert Jordan's love affair with Maria. Her parents have been shot dead and she is raped by the Fascists. She has been resuced from the train carrying political prisoners, by the Guerillas. Maria anguished and crazy has been brought to normalcy by Pilar, wife of another Guerilla, Pablo. Jordan's love for Maria indicates a sense of fulfilment and joy experienced by the hero in the midst of crisis.

Carlos Baker calls this novel an epic. Spain has been compared to Illium, Robert Jordan to Achilles, Pilar to Azax. Plabo's defeatism reminds us of Judas. The anti-power of the Fascists is similar to the supernatural power of destruction in an ancient Greek epic. The airships come in threes and the multiple of three, like the three witches in *Macbeth*, Robert Jordan has his premonitions of death. Pilar has the intuitive power to pregnosticate future. The bolding acting at the bridge reminds of Thermopylee and Horatius at the bridge. It is just a tug-of-war of criticism. Otherwise the novel is not an epic in the traditional sense. It has none of the heroism and supernatural machinery of an epic.

Like his other novels this novel too has symbolic significance. Maria, the crazy woman, is rehabilitated, and Robert Jordan himself is spiritually strengthened in his love with Maria. Like other Hemingway heroes he has courage, strength and valour, and can risk his life in the moment of danger. In blowing up the bridge, he has received the mortal wound. Maria's hair was cut short by the Falangists. The loss of hair is symbolic of the loss of womanhood. There are allusions to her growing hair. She has become a woman again with the growth of her hair. Maria says to Jordan, "They gave me this hair cut in Valladolid. It is almost grown out now." The growth of her hair symbolizes the recovery of her mental health, as it suggested in Milton's *Samson Agonistes* of the recovery of Samson's physical health.

The novel is successful from the point of view of characterization. Robert Jordan, Anselmo, Maria and Pilar have been portrayed successfully. Peasants and guerellas also figure in the novel. Pilar, Pablo's wife is a brave, gipsy woman with her tough character. She is something barbarous too. She has a very sharp tongue. She is responsible for love and marriage between Maria and Jordan. She is a symbol of the supernatural forces in this tragedy. Maria is obedient, submissive, and loving. Anselmo is a noble farmer.

Hemingway has introduced in this novel the stream-of-consciousness techniques to prove the minds of his characters, especially Jordan and Pilar. The internal monologues of the characters have been juxtaposed with a fine account of the bullfights, military compaigns and the battles.

"The novel has become an example of an experiment. The narrative flows forward and backward in time. Beach has stressed the fact that the hero's participation in the 'moral order' or 'life experience' has added another dimension to the meaning, 'the fifth dimension'. Undoubtedly, the work is a landmark in the career of Hemingway, and has become important for its symbolism, experiment, structure and characterization."

Q. 101. Discuss Hemingway as a realist.

Ans Hemingway said that the novelist should depict the 'actual thing'; he should deal with 'what actually happened'. About the *Old Man and the Sea*, he remarked, "I tried to make a real old man and a real boy, a real scene and a real fish and real sharks." So Hemingway is a writer of the naturalistic tradition. Alfred Kazin has rightly commented : "No writer in American literature after Thoreau has had Hemingway's sensitiveness to colour, to climate, to the knowledge of physical energy under heat or cold, the knowledge of the body, thinking and moving through

a landscape that Edmund Wilson in another connection has called Hemingway's 'Barometric accuracy'."*

Ernest Hemingway has reflected in his novels the real world, the contemporary problems caused by the outbreak of the War, the despair and the defeatism of the age, the disintegration of the old values, and the economic injustice. He has moulded into beautiful stories and novels his own experience of life; his works contain a great deal of autobiographical touches which are another proof of his realism. His initiation into the world of violence and brutality, his physical and psychological wounds received on the Italian front, his interests in the bullfights, boxing and fishing, and his participation in the wars all figure in his novels.

Hemingway is a realist who has seen the grimness of life in the company of his doctor father, who had performed the Caesarian operation on the pregnant Indian woman with a jack-knife without administering anaesthetics while her husband unable to endure pain caused to his wife, cut his throat with a razor. The subject-matter became the basis of Hemingway's story "Indian Camp".

"Hemingway's world is the world of war, of death and horror, courage and endurance, of capacity to risk and sustain pain and difficulty. This is the world "seen through a crack in the wall by a man who is pinned down by a fun fire".** It is the world of reality and struggle in which he found himself and had lived —the world, which impinged on his consciousness and in whose depiction, he found himself competent.

Hemingway's characters are drawn from real life. His men and women are the people whom we meet everywhere in the Western Hemisphere. We meet Americans, Indians, Englishmen, Italians, the Swiss and other European people in his novels. His women are the common women of the streets; there are hardly any except Catherine who are the idealizations of womanhood. His heroes have much of himself. His code-heroes are his elderly, saner, moral and instructive self; his heroes his vitality and youth, his joy and enjoyment.

His language is not superficial. He uses the colloquial and simple language and style. He is brief and to the point. His characters behave and talk in a real manner. They are portrayed against a real locale, and the background is generally that of war.

But too much significance should not be given to his rellism, and Hemingway should not be treated a 'materialist' in the fashion in which Galsworthy, Wells and Bennet are the 'materialists' and 'realists'. His realism should be studied with his symbolism.

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* Hemingway : Synopsis of a Career. p. 117.

** Philip Young, *Ernest Hemingway*, p. 40.

He has also introduced suggestiveness and symbolism to deepen the meaning. His novels are like 'icebergs'. Malcolm Cowley* has rightly suggested that Hemingway should not be treated as the writer of naturalistic tradition, but also in kinship with the symbolists and the nocturnal writers like Poe, Hawthorne and Melville.

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Q. 102. Discuss Hemingway as a symbolist.

Or

Discuss the symolism implied in the struggle of the man against the sea in "The Old Man and the Sea," and symbolism in his other works.

Ans. Hemingway once said : "The dignity of movement of an Iceberg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water." This statement holds the key to our understanding of Hemingway's novels. His novels are the icebergs; they are deceptive like icebergs. The visible areas glint with the hard factual lights of the naturalist. But this is not all. The supporting structure submerged and mostly invisible is built with a different kind of precision, that of the quiet symbolist. The element of symbolism is present in all the works of Hemingway, though the word 'symbolism' came to be associated with Hemingway only after the appearance of his novel *The Old Man and the Sea*. It was felt all of a sudden that he belongs not to the rank of realists but with writers like Poe, Hawthorne and Melville "the haunted and nocturnal writers, the men who dealt in images that were symbols of an inner world."

In *A Farewell to Arms* Hemingway achieves symbolic effects through a subtle process of reiterated suggestion. The three most important devices are, the weather, the emblematic people, and the landscapes. The association between rain and disaster is too prominent to be missed. Any one who reads *A Farewell to Arms* with one eye on the weather will eventually marvel as he watches the author playing with falling rain as a symbol of imminent doom. Near the close of book when Catherine is approaching her time of confinement the weather warms and the rains arrive. For a whole miraculous winter the lovers have gloried in their isolation, living happily in their high mountain fastness, surrounded by healthy cold air and clean snow, far from the mud and muck of war. Now at last the rains come, the time for the lying-in draws near, some great change lurks just beyond the lovers' limited horizon and we begin to sense that Catherine is in mortal danger, as indeed she is." The two friends of Frederic Henry also heighten the symbolic effect, so do the contrasted

* Malcolm Cowley, "Nightmare and Ritual in Hemingway," from *Twentieth Century Views : Hemingway*, p. 40.

landscapes. In *The Sun Also Rises*, the very injury sustained by the hero Jake Barnes causing impotence, is symbolic of the atmosphere of sterility and frustration found in the novel. In *The Old Man and the Sea* we find that the symbolism of Hemingway has far deeper significance than in the early novels. Here also the story is only the small visible part of the submerged iceberg built by a series of parables and symbols. Hemingway himself has said, "I tried to make a real old man and a real boy, a real scene and a real fish and real sharks. But if I made them good and sure enough they would mean many things. So apart from being a moving little story on fishing the book could be read as personal parable and a universal allegory."

Hemingway has borrowed a surprisingly abundant supply of facts from his own life for his novels. The books have therefore something autobiographical about them. Something of the author's character and personality is attributed to the hero of each Hemingway novel. But in *The Old Man and the Sea*, the identification between the author and the hero is complete ; and the story is an interesting personal alleaory. In Santiago's story the reader is to detect the struggles of Hemingway, his determination and his literary vicissitudes. Santiago, the old fisherman, who sets about his business with care and precision and extraordinary courage represents Hemingway. The points of comparison are many. The old fisherman feels that he has to establish his reputation once more and this fierce desire makes him strive fearlessly, ignoring all thought of pain and suffering Despite overwhelming difficulties, Santiago wins the fish, though finally he is defeated by the sharks. But he is happy that he has succumbed neither to the fish nor to the sea. The fisherman and the sea are so apt metaphors for the author and his craft that they need almost no transformation. Gulf stream is time in the case of Hemingway and the marin hidden in the depth of the sea is the truth that the writer is tirelessly trying to grasp. In Santiago's determination to go far into the sea, we see Hemingway's daring soul seeking new experiences, reaching out towards the unknown, while other writers remained satisfied with the region within sight of land where it is safer and easier to fish. Hemingway's conception of a good writer is indeed as one who stands in majestic isolation, where no one can help him. In the course of his Nobel Prize acceptance speech he said that the writer "If he is a good enough writer must face eternity or the lack of it each day." As Robert P. Weeks has put it, his image of the artist is of an isolated figure struggling alone in the face of eternity, a kind of cosmic Santiago, courageously trying to land a masterpiece single-handed beyond time and place. Hence the book is a triumph and assertion of Hemingway's own work as a writer.

The symbolism in the novel is not restricted, however to the personal level. More important than the personal parable is the

universal parable that underlies and impregnates the action The book is representation of life as a struggle against unconquerable natural forces in which a kind of victory is possible Like Browning, Hemingway seems to be pointing out the great lesson that it is not achievement that matters but aspiration Santiago's message is that while a man may grow old and lose his luck, he can still dare ("though much is taken much abides"), stick to the rules : keep on striving even in the teeth of opposition and thus make his failure a thing to be proud of, a kind of victory. Philip Young calls the story "an epic metaphor for life a contest in which even the problem of right and wrong seem paltry before the great thing that is the struggle." By the very nature of Santiago's aspiration and by the sheer grandeur of his personality and the inevitable nature of his failure he reminds us of the great heroes of Greek tragedy, doomed to failure and tragedy, yet struggling nobly against the malice of an adverse fate or unkind gods When Santiago says "man is not made for defeat, a man ean be destroyed, but not defeated" we get the feeling that classical tragedy imparts—that of the grandeur of human soul and the stature a man can have. The novel is classical not only in spirit but in technique too. Hemingway by keeping his story within narrow confines, and by observing the purity of design and above all by stressing the fatal flaw of pride in the protagonist (what the Greek dramatists called "hybris") makes his novel very much like the tragedies of Aeychslus, Sophocles or Euripides.

Side by side with this classical flavour there exists in the novel an unmistakable Christian strain. What Santiago does is to fight the good fight, without caring for the reward In the last stage of the fight he murmurs "I don't care who kills who", for the most important thing is that he must run the race and stick to the fight. The Christian symbolism is underscored by a number of little details. Throughout, there is indication that Santiago is an illustration of the doctrine of Christian love, despite the fact that he kills the fish. It is not exactly by accident that the old man is named Santiago. For the name means St. James. When this is understood one is struck by the connection between Santiago the fisherman and the fisherman apostle and martyr from the sea of Galilee. Santiago has something of St. Francis in him too for this man feels a keen sense of kinship with the birds of the air and the fishes of the sea Like the Ancient Mariner he loves all things both great and small He speaks of the fish as his friend and feels sorry that he has to kill it. Later he says, "I am a tired old man ; but I have killed this fish which is my brother." Killing it pains his kind heart and he reflects sadly "it is good that we do not have to try to kill the sun or the moon or the stars. It is enough to live on the sea and kill our true brothers." This compassion and natural piety, and the humility that is always in the old man, are essentially Christian virtues. Inspite of Santiago's repeated mutterings of "Hail Mary", he does

not strike us as a religious person. But the Christian spirit is in him. The book offers several allusions to Crucifixion, thus accentuating the Christian symbolism. Several critics have pointed out the similarity between the figure of the crucified Christ and the old man as he settled against the wood of the bough. Carols Baker sums up the details that work out this idea thus : "Santiago shows certain qualities of mind and heart which are clearly associated with the chracter and personality of Jesus Christ in the gospel stories. There is the same essential gallantry, a kind of militance There is the staying power which helps him in his determination to last to the end of whatever is to come. There is the ability to ignore physical pain while concentrating on the larger object which is to be achieved." This image is reinforced by many passages in the book. The writer speaks of "a noise such as a man might make involuntarily feeling the nail go through his hand and into the wood." The old man stretched on his bed in exhausted slumber is described thus : " .. ... he slept face down on the newspapers with his arms out straight and the palms of his hands up." The similarity between the fisherman and the crucified Jesus is unmistakable The allusion to Christian symbolism, particularly to the crucifixion, shows a development in Hemingway's novels. They are present in the early novels, but are not very important. The symbolism gathers strength in "Across the River and into the Tree" and comes to a climax in the book "Old Man and the Sea."

Hemingway's use of symbolism however, is so restrained and sparing that he cannot be included, with those who are usually labelled as symbolists. "Taken at face value the denomination 'symbolist' has meanings in the common language of criticism that are quite inapplicable to him. But beyond this Hemingway uses symbolism, with a severe restraint that in his good work always staunchly protects his realism. So does he use irony. It is the ambiguity of life itself that Hemingway has sought to render, and if irony has served him peculiarly well it is because he sees life as inescapably ironic. But if we must classify him, let us do him justice : with all his skilful use of artistic ambiguity, he remains the great realist of twentieth century American fiction." (E. M. Halliday).

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Q. 103. Give an account of the character of Santiago and show how he embodies the essential nobility of human striving.

Or

"The Old Man and the Sea" illustrates the basic human qualities of compassion, courage and endurance." Elaborate this remark.

Ans Tennyson's Ulysses despite old age cherishes the will "to

strive, to seek, to find and not to yield". thus epitomising the highest and the noblest qualities in man. The world's greatest stories, classical and romantic, pay tribute to the indomitable courage and the determination of man to strive against all odds. The fascination that great tragedies exert on us is explained by the fact that they bring to our notice the grandeur of the human soul, which doomed to ultimate failure, yet shows splendid fortitude and fierce daring. Hemingway's novel *The Old Man and the Sea* belongs to that collection of world's stories that portray the sublime courage and endurance that man in the face of overwhelming difficulties displays

The hero is Santiago an old Cuban fisherman who has spent a life-time struggling against a fierce sea. The very description of the man, given at the beginning of the book suggests the sort of granduer of personality that we associate with a Lear or a Prometheus or an Oedipus. He gives an impression of strength and ruggedness. "The old man was thin and gaunt with deep wrinkles in the back of his neck. The brown blotches of the benevolent skin cancer the sun brings from its reflection on the tropic sea were on his cheeks. The blotches ran well down the sides of his face and his hands had the deep-creased scars from handling heavy fish on the cords. But none of these scars were fresh. They were as old as erosions in a fishless desert. Everything about him was old except his eyes and they were the same colour as the sea and were cheerful and undefeated " The old man seems to have run out of his luck and has not caught any fish for long. The loving boy Manolin brings him food and drink which the old man accepts gratefully. "He was too simple to wonder when he had attained humility. But he knew he had attained it and he knew it was not disgraceful and it carried no loss of true pride." He rows out once far into the sea. Alone on the vast ocean, he is embarked on a grim struggle though he is not aware of it yet. He watches the fishes of the sea and the birds that flit above the waters lovingly. Fondly he watches the flying fish and the delicate birds, thinking, ' the birds have a harder life than we do except for the robber birds and the heavy strong ones. Why did they make birds so delicate and fine as those sea swallows when the ocean can be so cruel ?" But he loves the sea too, for all her cruelty. He baits a huge fish and then begins a fierce fight between the fish and the old man, a struggle in which one is to meet with defeat. The old man feels at a disadvantage being old and alone, and absolutely without provisions. He wishes the boy were with him and reflects, "no one should be alone in their old age." But not for a moment does he think of letting the fish go. "Fish" he said softly aloud, "I'll stay with you until I am dead." The tussel with the fish gives him great admiration for his adversary. "Fish", he mutters, "I love you and respect you very much." Like a refrain appear the words "I'll kill him though, in all his greatness and his glory." Victory becomes important to the old

man because he has to vindicate himself "I'll show him what a man can do and what a man endures." His heart is filled with noble pity for the creature with which he is engaged in a mighty conflict. This man whose soul is tuned into a fine harmony with the sea and the stars claim kinship with the fish it is a pity, though that he is to kill it. "I am glad we do not have to try to kill the stars," he exclaims. The men for whom the fish gets killed are not worthy of him. ' There is no one worthy of eating him from the manner of his behaviour and his great dignity.

Without food, without sleep, with a hand that is rendered useless by numbness the old man struggles against the enemy. As the grim fight continues weariness gets the better of him and a stage is reached when the old man does not care for the outcome. "You are killing me fish", the old man thought. "But you have a right to. Never have I seen a greater or more beautiful, or a calmer or more noble thing than you. brother. Come on and kill me. I do not care who kills who." But this mood noes not last. His resolve to win strengthens him and finally the fish "my brother" is killed. But victory is not completely his, for the sharks set upon him, tear the flesh off his prize. His fight against the sharks coming so soon after his hard-won victory makes him despair for a moment. "It was too good to last, he thought. I wish it had been a dream now and that I had never hooked the fish and was alone in bed on the newspapers." But the real nature of the man asserts itself the next moment : "But man is not made for defeat", he said "A man can be destroyed but not defeated." The thought of home now sustains him and wearily he tows his boat home. But even in defeat his dignity never deserts him. "He knew he was beaten now finally and without remedy and he went back to the stern and found the jagged end of the tiller would fit in the slot of the rudder well enough for him to steer. He settled the sack around his shoulders and put the skiff on her course. He sailed lightly now and he had no thought nor any feeling of any kind. He was past everything now and he sailed the skiff to make his home port as well and as inteligently as he could " Reaching his shack he throws himself on to his bed. "He pulled the blanker over his back and legs and slept face down on the newspapers with his arms out straight and the palms of his hands up." The boy Manolin and the other fishermen admire the remains of the fish and declare it to be the greatest marlin caught there.

Santiago thus is an illustration of Hemingway's reverence for life's struggle and his faith in the nobility of human striving. The story of this Cuban fisherman declares to the world that the simple man is capable of decency, dignity and even heroism. John Atkins has observed that the age of all Hemingway heroes matches his own at the time of writing. Santiago is the mature Hemingway but more than that he represents man who knows his manliness As such he is not merely a symbol fisherman, he

represents a class, a type of mankind. Like Wordsworth's leech-gatherer he is probably not in himself an exceptionally noble character, but what has happened is that in both instances an individual has been singled out against such ancient back drops of sea or moorland and then staged in terms of a contest of endurance that he enters immediately into the gallery of literary immortals."

The old man represents a view of life and his experience is a form of martyrdom. The old man's only fault, if it is a fault, consists in doing to the best of his ability what he was born to do, and Hemingway suggests that everyman who does his duty is a Christ and has to bear the cross. Whether his adventure in life ends well or ill every man can show his manliness. That ten thousand times he had proved it meant nothing. He can prove it again and must go on proving it. Santiago who though destroyed, refuses to be defeated shows us what it is to be a man. As Baker remarks, urged on by the pride and by the love of his trade, by his refusal to take continual bad luck as his portion and by a resurgent belief that he might win, Santiago made trial of the impossible. In this tragic process he achieved the moral triumph.

Q. 104 Write a note on Hemingway's style.

Or

Point out the remarkable features of Hemingway's style in "The Old Man and the Sea."

Ans. Philip Young, one of the biographers of Hemingway, has pointed out that the saying "style is the man" is especially appropriate in the case of Ernest Hemingway. From the beginning of his literary career Hemingway was obsessed with the thought of finding a styte. Even in his school days young Hemingway was trying out styles for himself and talking about an "author's style" to the mystification of his class mates. Even in those days he had the determination to write a different style from that of his class-mates and this led him away from elegance and towards the emphasis of limited repetitive vocabulary. Commenting on the formative influences that shaped his style. Hemingway said that one of the deepest and subtlest influence was that of the Bible. "That's how I learned to write", he said "by reading the Bible", adding that by 'Bible' he meant The Old Testament. This does not mean that Hemingway consciously copied the style of the Old Testament. He was certainly unaware of it. Anyhow, along with the constant Biblical allusions in the books of Hemingway we detect the Biblical pulsation in his mature prose style. The Bible's simple repetitive understatements, paced qy the incantatory 'and' appear all too frequently in Hemingway.

Hemingway admitted that the period for which he workd on

the *Star*, a paper of the Kansas city, in 1917 was a formative period as far as his style was concerned. *The Star* actually put a finish on his style, for the *Star's* style sheet was a perfect Hemingway hand book, directing him to stick to qualities of writing which he had already discovered for himself : "use short sentences. Use short paragraph. Use vigorous English, Be positive, not negative. Avoid the use of adjectives especially such extravagant ones 'splended', 'gorgeous', 'grand', 'magnificent' etc." Hemingway was very much indebted to these rules which demanded fresh language and economy. "Those were the best rules I ever learned for the business of writing", he recalled in 1940. "I've never forgotten them. No man with any talent, who feels and writes truly about the thing he is trying to say can fail to write well if he abides by them." But dwelling on the influences on Hemingway's style should not make us blind to the fact that the beauty of his style owed much to the genius of the man himself. It is Hemingway's greatest contribution to the world of letters and many are the writers who have, played the sedulous ape to him. Archibald Macleish has made the famous remark that Hemingway has "whittled a style" for his time. Even the Nobel Prize for literature in 1954 came to Hemingway mostly because of his style, for the Committee cited his "powerful style—forming mastery of the art of modern narration." *The Old Man and the Sea* is the best example of Hemingway's splendid style. It has gone a long way in ridding the prose of modern writers of literary embellishment and sentimentalism and padding.

The most remarkable quality of the style of *The Old Man and the Sea* is its down-to-earth conversational tone The fresh and simple colloquial and unemotional suited Hemingway's objective narrative technique very well. The very beginning of the novel is informal, simple, forceful and relaxed putting the reader immediately at ease.

He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream and he had gone eighty-four days without taking a fish. In the first forty days a boy had been with him. But after forty days without a fish the boy's parents had told him that the old man was now definitely and finally *Salao*, which is the worst form of unlucky, and the boy had gone at their orders in another boat which caught three good fish the first week. It made the boy sad to see the old man come in each day with his skiff empty and he always went down to help him carry either the coiled lines or the gaff and harpoon and the sail that was furled around the mast. The sail was patched with flour sacks, and furled, it looked like the flag of permanent defeat. The simple style which Hemingway has chosen has great appropriateness to this story of simple fisherman. Carefully chosen and formal words would have been incongruous with the theme and setting.

Hemingway has practised the strictest objectivity in writing. The author remains deliberately in the background, never thrusting himself forward. Though the story is one of much suffe ing, the descriptions never reach emotional heights. The author is just like a neutral onlooker and careful details kindle our imagination and tell the story themselves, making an intrusion of the author to describe things, unnecessary. With the very minimum of words Hemingway creates the scene most powerfully, as in this passage : "He did not truly feel good because the pain from the cord across his back had almost passed pain and gone into a dullness that he mistrusted. But I have had worse things than that, he thought. My hand is only cut a little and the cramp is gone from the other. My legs are all right. Also now I have gained on him in the question of sustenance.

It was dark now as it becomes dark quickly after the sun sets in September. He lay against the worn wood of the bow and raised all that he could. The first stars were out. He did not know the name of Regel but he saw it and knew soon they would all be out and he would have all his distant friends, 'The fish is my friend too', he said aloud. 'I have never seen or heard of such a fish. But I must kill him. I am glad we do not have to try to kill the stars.'

To achieve immediacy, Hemingway has used words sparingly, with a powerful suggestion of actions and experience behind these words. Words are used with such telling effect that we are able immediately to visualise the scene. Hemingway made only restrictive use of the adjectives, and omitted all high sounding words. He regarded the adjective not as a necessity but as a luxury, decorative more than functional and hence to be shunned unless absolutely necessary. In this respect Hemingway reminds us of George Orwell who was violently opposed to the use of adjectives and all decorative devices in writing.

Hemingway used only a few and limited number of verbs. The forms of 'to be' appear abundantly and other verbs too are short and apt and simple, never spectacular. The recurring pattern is illustrated by sentences like these : "The old man's head was clear and good now and he was full of resolution but he had little hope. It was too good to last he thought." Hemingway laid much emphasis on nouns. He regarded the noun as the most important part of speech because it stands for concrete objects as well as abstract ideas. A string of nouns is often formed by connecting conjunctions and thus Hemingway tries to convey the flow of experience. 'And' and 'but' are Key words in his technique. 'Then' and 'so' also occur a great deal. "The speech of the line was cutting his hands badly but he had always known this would happen and he tried to keep the cutting across the calloused parts and not let the line slip into the palm or cut the finger."

Side tracks and deviations are carefully excluded from the narrative technique of Hemingway. He never writes complex or involved sentences. Structural complications are taboo to him and he moves always in one direction and thus maintains the purity of his style. Hemingway sticks to simple and compound sentences because he felt that the subordinate clauses of complex sentences might stand in the way of the reader's perception In the dipped athletic movement of his sentences and bare bleakness of conversation Hemingway seeks to present a succession of images, each like a new frame in a strip of film, which will hold the readers' undivided attention for a brief moment before it gives way to the next. The use of such a technique the "exaltation of the instant", as it has been called, has enabled Hemingway to achieve his "special vividness and fluidity." For example : "Then he jumped again and again and the boat was going fast although the line was still racing out and the old man was raising the strain to the breaking point and raising it to breaking point again and again." Here we have a swift succession of images, each one presenting itself before being displaced by the next. The whole series of impressions presents a vivid scene as the old man plays the fish.

Hemingway's contribution to modern literature consists of putting the raw language of every day life into literature. The novel's swift action and vivid style have contributed to its gre t success. The bareness and stark simplicity and freedom from sentimentality that characterise Hemingway's style, even when he speaks of such things as the brotherhood of all created things.

"Then he was sorry for the great fish that had nothing to eat and his determination to kill him never relaxed in his sorrow for him. How many people will he feed, he thought ? But are they worthy to eat him ? No of course not there is no one worthy of eating him from the manner of his behaviou and his great dignity.

"I do not understand these things, he thought. But it is good that we do not have to try to kill the sun or the moon or the stars. It is enough to live on the sea and kill our true brothers."

In short Hemingway's style in *The Old Man and the Sea* fully reveals the truth of Ford Madox Ford's comment : "Hemingway's words strike you, each one as if they were pebbles fetched from a brook. They live and shine each in its place." Every sentence that he wrote is so finished and perfect that one cannot think of its being improved That Hemingway was able to keep up such style unflaggingly throughout the whole book is a great proof of his undoubted genius.

Q. 105. Bring out the underlying themes and symbolism in "The Old Man and the Sea."

Ans *The Old Man and the Sea* is undoubtedly the most moving and the most heartening of Hemingway's novels. The story is almost nothing Yet the book is fascinating, for many reasons. The vivid background of the sea, which is almost a person, the feeling that Santiago has for the sea, the detailed accoun of every move of the fisherman as he goes about his business, accurate descriptions of the equipments of the fisherman, Hemingway's way of telling the story, the perfectly arched line of suspense and loss, all these are the surface values that make the book interesting. The book is however also a typical American Parable, a novel which yields rich meaning and enduring lessons for mankind. The story comes from an incident which Hemingway had described in *Esquire* in 1936. "Another time an old man fishing alone in a skiff out of Cabanas hooked a great marlin, that, on the heavy sashcord handline pulled the skiff far out to sea. Two days later the old man was pickek up by fishermen, sixty miles to the eastward, the head and forward part of the marlin lashed alongside. What was left of this fish less than half, weighed eigh hundred pounds. The old man had stayed witn him a day, a night, a day and another night while the fish swam deep and pulled the boat. When he had come up the old man had pulled the boat upon him and harpooned him. Lashed alongside, the sharks had hit him and the old man had fought them out alone in the Gulf Stream in a skiff, clubbing them, stabbing at them, lunging at them with an oar until he was exhausted and the sharks had eaten all that they could hold. He was crying in the boat when the fishermen picked him up, half crazy from his loss and the sharks were still circling the boat." This account is the basis of Hemingway's masterpiece *The Old Man and the sea.* To this bare skeleton of a plot. Hemingway has given deep significance, as is evident from the themes and the symbols found in the novel.

The story is open to many interpretations. It has two themes which are outstanding. **The first may be summarized as : 'What a man can do and what a man endures." The second concerns a man's dependence upon his fellowmen.** *The Old Man and the Sea* is a tribute to that unconquerable will of man which prompts him for ever "to strive, to seek, to find and not to yield." The book is to be interpreted as a parable of mankind showing man's life as a struggle against fierce natural forces which are far stronger than him. Though certainly it is a battle in which defeat of man is inevitable. a kind of victory is won in defeat through dignity and endurance. The old man's life is an incessant struggle against natural forces, a constant wrestling with these powers. For, day after day he rows into the Gulf Stream braving the elements, in order to m_ke a living. The defeat of the old man in this struggle is seen in the futility of his attempts. Eighty four days the old

man struggles without ever hooking a fish. And the other fishermen regard him as 'Salao' which means most unlucky. Even the Boy Manolin who loves the old man, is warned against being his companion. The old man's sail is described as looking like "the flag of permanent defeat," when it is furled. But the most significant thing is the attitude of the old man himself. He has confidence in himself and his eyes are cheerful and undefeated. And then he hooks a big fish. There follows a saga of heroism, and endurance. The old man sustains himself with the thought that man is not made for defeat. Even when after incredible hardship the old man has finally killed the marlin, he has the far greater ordeal of fighting against the sharks. The old man is powerless to keep the ravenous sharks away from his catch. "I'll fight them until I die", he decides. And he puts up a brave fight indeed. But again and again they come leaning at the fish The old man is left with the bare skeleton of the fish. Yet he is not ready to admit defeat. "And what beat you. he thought 'Nothing', he said aloud 'I went out too far.' In his eager plan for the future, all sense of defeat is forgotten. With Manolin he makes plans : "We must get a good killing lance and always have it on board. You can make the blade from a spring leaf from an old Ford. We can grind it in Guanabacoa. It should be sharp and not tempered so it will break. My knife broke."

Santiago, thus battled against the fish with courage and has faced his loss with dignity. He is physically exhausted, but mentally he is hopeful ; he is ready once more to face the hardships of life. It is the knowledge that a simple man is capable of such decency, dignity and even heroism that makes the story outstanding. Santiago's victory lies in the fact that he has endured suffering without impairment of his belief in the worth of what he has been doing. In the story of Santiago one gets a favourite theme of the American novelist—man alone against or contrasted with the cosmos. Paul West in *The Modern Novel* evaluates the book thus : "In a large sense, Santiago is a representative of suffering humanity which finds no purpose in its paln, no prize for its efforts, and experiences (like Santiago) destruction of the thing long sought-for. The good is not in the fish's skeleton, but in the man. Hemingway's novel celebrates man's power to endure what appear the inexorable ways of an impersonal Nature."

Allied to the theme of triumph through suffering is the theme of the interdependence of men. The old man without the presence and help of Manolin and of his friends and without the consoling thoughts of them while at sea, could not have achieved what he did. Hemingway brings out in diverse ways the old man's dependence on Manolin. The old man is sustained by the food he brings, and also by the frank admiration of the boy. "There are many good fishermen," he says "and some great ones. But there is only you." Manolin gives to the old man much material help

as well. He brings him food and bait, and is always ready to help the old man. Santiago is dependent also on many others. The local restaurant owner provides him with food and cups of coffe: and the wine shop owner supplies him with the newspaper in which the old man can read of his beloved baseball.

The ordeal that the old man has to undergo makes him utter two sentences that are significant. "I wish the boy was here" he says and again ; "I wish I had the boy". The very thought of the boy brings him encouragement. Though loneliness is inevitable and unavoidable for him, he cannot help feeling : "no one should be alone in their old age". Thought of the boy gives him the courage to carry on. At one stage there is an interesting process of thought in which the old man indulges. It starts with his philosophical reflection : "Everything kills everything else in some way." Then he adds : "Fishing kills me exactly as it keeps me alive ....." Then he corrects the statement thus : "The boy keeps me alive......I must not deceive myself too much."

When the sharks have defeated him, and when the thought of the beautiful fish can no longer cheer him, he strengthens himself by thinking about others, especially Manolin, who is sure to be feeling anxious about him. It is soothing for the old man to recall that others do care for him. "I cannot be far out now", he muses "I hope no one has been too worried. There is only the boy to worry, of course. But I am sure he would have confidenee. Many of the older fishermen will worry. Many others too,......I live in a good town." At one stage he is filled with a passionate desire to see the lights on the shore which could symbolise for him security, social contact and fellowship. "I wish I could see the glow from the lights", he thought. "I wish too many things. But that is the thing I wish for now."

Back on the land, exhausted and weak, the old man has to rely entirely on the boy. The boy's youth supplies the old man with the will to look forward towards the future. One of his pleasant sensations on shore is the awareness that it is nice to have someone to talk to instead of speaking only to himself and the sea. This saga of suffering has ensured one important thing for him. He need not be alone, all all alone, any more. The boy will fish with him.

Another important theme that is carefully worked out in the novel is that of man's oneness with nature. Between Santiago and the sea, there exists an inviolable bond. He loves the sea. Hemingway explains this aspect of the old man's character thus : "He always thought of the sea *la mar* which is what people call her is Spanish when they love her. Sometimes those who love her say bad things of her but they are always said as though she were a woman. Some of the younger fishermen, those who used buoys as floats for their lines and had motor-boats,.........spoke of her as *el*

mar which is ma culine. The spoke of her as a contestant or a place or even an enemy. But the old man always thought of her as feminine and as something that gave or withheld great favours, and if she did wild or wicked things it was because she could not help them. The moon affects her as it does a woman, he thought." The feeling of love and respect that Santiago feels for the sea is exentended even towards the fish, his adversary. "Fish, I love you and respect you very much," he utters repeatedly. At one stage he says loudly, "The fish is my friend too. I have never seen or heard of such a fish. But I must kill him. I am glad we do nct have to try to kill the stars". The essential bond between the man and the fish is stressed by passages like this : "Then he was sorry for the great fish that had nothing to eat and his determination to kill him never relaxed in his sorrow for him. How many people will be feed, he thought. But are they worthy to eat him ? No, of course not. There is no one worthy of eating him from the manner of his behaviour and his great dignity. I do not understand these things, he thought. But it is good that we do not have to try to kill the sun or the moon or the stars. It is enough to live on the sea and kill our true brothers." Later the old man addresses the fish as brother—"Never have I seen a greater, or more beautiful, or a calmer or more noble thing than you, brother come on and kill me I do not care who kills who." Later the old man laments : "I am a tired old man. But I have killed this fish which is my brother."

A number of other little touches go to strengthen this theme of man's bond with nature The old man feels a sense of communion with everything on the sea. About the two porpoises that come swimming near the boat he says "they are our brothers like the fiying fish His heart fills with compassion for a bird that looks tired. "Take a good rest, small bird," he whispers. And then again, : "Stay at my house if you like, bird.........I am sorry I cannot hoist the sail and take you in with the small breeze that is rising. But I am with a friend." One of the significant passages in the whole book runs thus : "He looked across the sea and knew how alone he was now. But he could see the prisms in the deep dark water and the line stretching ahead and the strange undulation of the calm. The clouds were building up now for the trade wind and he looked ahead and saw a flight of wild ducks etching themselves against the sky over the water, then blurring, then etching again and he knew no man was ever alone on the sea."

The sea and the wonderful creatures on the sea instil into the old man a sense of man's pettiness. He recognizes the fish as more noble and more able than men. The impression that we get from all this is akin to the message conveyed by the poem *The Ancient Mariner* : "He prayeth best, who loveth best all things great and small."

The novel also contains **the theme of man drawing inspiration from inexhaustible sources of spiritual power.** The constant reference to baseball the recurring dream that the old man has of lions are meant to suggest the springs of youth from which the old man draws vitality and sense of purpose. It is significant that he dreams of lions mostly and not of distracting things like storms or women or other such things which could only sap his energy rather than replenish it. Drawing strength thus from several things the old man fights his great battle which holds a profound lesson for all men The message seems to be that one has to keep on fighting, and not really rest on laurels. "I will show him what a man can do and what a man endures"......... The thousand times that he had proved it meant nothing. Now he was proving it again. Each time was a new time. "Hemingway's message is always simple ; but it is true and even noble. He says simply that a man must endure this life, must be brave in the teeth of its challenges even unto death, to sail on this course and take it when it comes. If a man does this, he will remain undefeated, no matter what he loses."

What Hemingway wanted his sharks to represent is a question that is often asked. It is reasonable to assume that they represent all that is evil in this life. They represent the forces of evil against which man is forever pitted. They deprive Santiago of all that he has gained after desperate fight. But in doing this they bring him to a greater understanding of himself and of life

The symbolism of the crucifix is used in the book. Santiago's name itself is meant to be symbolic, suggesting as it does St James and St. Francis, at once. The humility of the old man and his compassion for the living things of the sea emphasize the basic Christian symbolism. We find it also in the picture of crucifixion deliberately evoked Soon after the old man's victory over the marlin he spots the sharks and exclaims "Ay". The novelist tells us : "There is no translation for this word and perhaps it is just a noise such as a man might make, involuntarily, feeling the nail go through his hands and into the wood " Again when the old man comes home exhausted, his battle having ended in futility he throws himself on the bed and we are told "he slept face down on the newspapers with his arms out straight and the palms of his hands up." There are also suggestions of Calvary in the old man's strug gling up the hill and falling under the weight of his mast.

The boy Manolin also serves as a symbol of hope, faith and promise of the future. It is not accidentally that he is named so for Manolin is the fond diminutive of Manuel, which is the name of the bull fighter of *The Undefeated* and also the name of the Messiah. The qualities that he symbolises are brought to our notice by several passages. The boy's father forbids him to go in the company of the luckless old man.

"He hasn't much faith," says the boy.

'No", says the old man, "But we have. Haven't we ? to which the boy replies "Yes". The boy is indeed the old man's Messiah of strength and hope. "I'll bring the luck with me", he assures the old man. Carlos Baker has pointed out that the boy is also the old man's disciple, associated in his mind with the lions he had seen in Africa. "He only dreamed of places now and of the lions on the beach. They played like young cats in the dusk and he loved them as he loved the boy."

Summing up the meaning of this fascinating book Sheridan Baker writes thus in his book *Earnest Hemingwoy—An Introduction and Interpretation* : "For once in a major work, Hemingway was able to free himself from the old self-pity, the old resentment against the world for not being as one would wish it, or against life for leading us to death. For once he accepts life. Within his intellectual limits never broad nor deep, he has written a positive existential fable for the mid twentieth Century." Incidentally the book is also an allegory of Hemingway's personal effort as a writer.

Q. 106. Discuss Ernest Hemingway as a writer of the 'Lost Generation'.

Ans. The post-war novelists denounced war which alienated them from the past. They experienced a sense of disillusionment which they depicted in their novels. They realized the war was great calamity to the nation which destroyed life and property. They have dethroned the old traditional values and enunciated revaluations of the old ideals regarding sex and life. In the realm of literature they are the founders of new technique.

Among the writers of the Lost Generation are included Sherwood Anderson, Sinclair Lewis, E. E. Cummings, Ernest Hemingway, Scott Fitzgerald, John Dos Passos, William Faulkner and Gould Cozzens. The term 'Lost Generation' was given to them by Gertrude Stein.

Most of the writers of the Lost Generation had fought the First World War or were associated with it. In Dos Passos's *Three Soldiers* (1921), Gumming's '*The Enormous Room* (1922), Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* and other novels we find the ideals of the writers of the Lost Generation fully reflected.

In the work of these writers the world of violence and brutality, of war and death, of horror and terror is created. They are realists and portray the real sufferings caused by the First World War. The American personality living in the stress of war developed a rebellious attitude. There was the abolition of the class distinction. Women became more domineering than men.

Economic sufferings caused by the war are also portrayed by these writers. Some of the writers suppressed their sense of futility, others betrayed a sense of rebelliousness The writers experimented with new styles. Irony became their main weapon.

Lady Ashley represents the woman of the Lost Generation. She figures in Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*. Nick Admas is a symbol of twentieth century disillusionment and sensibility of the people of post-war generation. Santiago in *The Old Man and the Sea* is a symbolic manifestation of what man can achieve of and accomplish agaifist heavy odds. The character of Mannel in *The Undefeated* symbolises the undefeated man who has laid down his life to prove his manhood to himself.

The subject-matter of the works of the post war (Lost) Generation of writers reveals a deep interest in depicting the inner turmoil, conflict, cynicism and the past. A note of rebellion, a sense of Bohemianism (abnormalcy and unconventionalism), a crave for liberty, a note of primitivism are also visible in their works. The cardinal principle is : 'The free soul must seek liberty......One must have sexual liberty......One must walk out of marriage that ceased to be satisfactory, sexually or socially." Another important theme stressed by these writers is alienation from the society. Sherwood Anderson himself was alienated from society. In his novel, *Windy McPherson's Son*, the character abandons his business in the manner of its creator in search of truth. In Hemingway's novels, *A Farewell to Arms*, and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, the heroes Henry and Jordan are alienated from the American society.

The writers of the Lost Generation have drawn on the American infiuence. Each of them has his individual characteristics. A mood of despair pervades their writings. A sense of futility and meaninglessness also is found in the literature of this period. In most cases, the hero accepts violence in his life and commits violent deeds to which he may succumb. But there is a sense of triumph. In spite of the gloom, the mood of frustration and defeatism, the novels produced in this period, reflect the creative dynamism, acute awareness and the heightened consciousness of the writers. They were exponents of new experiments. They gave birth to a new type of fiction which bore the impress of the age, the hang-over of the war and the essence of the times.

To quote W. M. Frohock, "Their particular attitude towards time, their consciousness of frustration and despair like the mood of Hemingway in *The Sun Also Rises* was characteristic of the years of the great boom. Crass American prosperity had made the expatriation of the artist most inevitable; a Lost Generation

slumped around the tables of the best cafe's in a half dozen European capitals and wrote for American literary reviews that were published in Paris and Points East. The gloom, however comfortable, was very deep : we expected the world to end, if it ever got round to doing so, rather with a whimper than with a bang. It ended that particular way, with a crash in 1919." (*The Novels of Violence in America*, 1957, pp. 11-12).

HENRY JAMES (1843-1916)

Q. 107. Show how Henry James was responsible for the stabilizing of the novel as a literary form.

Or

Discuss Henry James as a novelist.

Ans. It was Henry James "who had achieved the first completely satisfying way of writing a novel" (Dorothy Richardson). His famous novels are *Roderick Hudson* (1870), *The American* (1877), *Daisy Miller* (1879), *The Portrait of a Lady* (188·), *Washington Square* (1881), *The Bostonians* (1886), *The Princess Casamassima* (1886), *What Masie Knew* (1897), *The Sacred Fount* (1901), *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), *The Ambassadors* (1903), *The Golden Bowl* (1904), *The Portrait of a Young Artist*, *The American Scene* (1907), *The Ivory Tower*, etc.

It was James who formulated rules and theories of novel writing. Although Hawthorne and Melville had written novels, but they had not formulated any theory of fiction. All sorts of forms in the field of fiction—The Gothic romance, the historical romance and the domestic novel appeared, yet there were no rigid rules of construction and technique. Following the footprints of Flaubert who had recommended simplicity in the construction and design of a novel, Henry James came with a neat theory which he put into practice. He was influenced by Hawthorne also.

His detractors call him a lunatic cutting out paper dolls and showing them as works of art. His enthusiastic admirers call him "probably the most eminent man of letters America had yet to show." They refer to his influence on great novelists such as Conrad, Mrs Wharton, Virginia Woolf, Proust and Guide. His critics find fault with him for his rejection of American life and native scenes as themes for his novels, for the lack of action in his novels, for his preoccupation with a smaller corner of life. It is said that Henry James deals with "mind instead of action, building plan instead of building material" But Henry James's admirers feel that in his very weakness lies his strength.

According to Henry James, a novel was an extension of life. He was very much concerned with the form He said that the paraphernilia that one invariably finds in ordinary novels—romantic scenery, comic relief, anecdotes and other materials are not strictly essential in a novel. What is essential is consistent point of view which is very much lacking in his novels. He is not interested in material themes and subject-matter such as murder, suicide, adultery, conspiracy, fraud, revolution, rape, etc. Action

in the familiar and obvious sense is scarce in James. But there is dialogue in plenty in his books. The language which his characters speak is not realistic in the sense of reproducing actual idiom of the persons concerned. Like Santayana, with whom he had much in common, James made his characters speak the lingo natural to himself.

James deals with a restricted area of life. His characters are of one class, well-bred men and women without any occupation but with plenty of leisure of wealth, concerned primarily with the art of living. They are naturally selected from those classes of society that James knew best. Henry James, says Conrad, is 'the historian of fine consciences'; he reveals the souls of his characters. Characterization was of paramount importanee to Henry James.

Of course the world of Henry James's novels is a narrow one. There were areas of human experience that were closed to him. He was quite ignorant of the world of commerce or of politics and was unconcerned with the life of the bourgeois, the slums, the frontier, the universal world of the worker and the drama of ordinary emotions. As one critic puts it 'he was interested in writing neither an "Our Town" nor a "Hamlet." He belonged neither to the romantic school of novelists, nor to the realists. He scorned romanticism for its untruths and naturalism for its cluttered documentation. His forte was the social scene and this he reflected with an astounding eensibility.

Henry James raised the dignity of fiction and gave the reader a new intellectual experience. He rose in revolt against the sprawling shapelessness of the fiction of his days and gave form and direction to fiction. He limited the point of view and redefined the function of narrator and protagonist, giving thus to the novel a new focus. Of course he is at times difficult. His obscurity is the result of his desire to be transparently clear, in an attempt to be clear he often modified and refined what he wrote till his style became an involuted one brilliantly satirized by his brother William James. But except in very few instances, James is never actually lacking in clarity for the reader willing to give the text his complete attention. As a novelist Henry James expected the complete cooperation of the readers, and bewailed the fact that "the faculty of attention has utterly vanished from the general anglo-saxon mind." The style of Henry James demands this faculty of attention, but it is a style which has the quality of appropriateness. If it is not full of humour, it is enlivened by irony Humour when it occurs is natural and an essential part of characterisation as in the description of a character thus: "When Edward Brookenham goes out to dinner he "generally brings three pocket handkerchiefs and six jokes." Despite his limitations, Henry James must be acknowledged as a great master of fiction who brought into the writing of the novle sincerity and a great instinct for order and beauty. Even his critics

pay homage to his superb art. It is not correct to say that he lacks emotional depth or touch with common humanity. As Marcus Cunliffe puts it "every one of his (Henry James's) work from the smallest story to the longest and most involute of novels shows a consistent warm but unwinking gaze upon a humanity capable of abysmal treachery and evil, capable of undying loyalty and goodness : these chronicled with a degree of perception that no other novelist has surpassed."

Q. 108. Comment on Henry James's views on fiction.

Ans. Henry James who dedicated his life to the writing of novels and short stories was a formidable literary critic as well. He wrote much on the art of fiction and what he has written in his essays and prefaces is most illuminating to a student of his novels. When Henry James prepared his works for the final New York edition, he spent the years from 1903 to 1906 writing prefaces. This monumental task has been of great help to the readers of Henry James as these prefaces provide them with frank self-criticism and edifying exploration of the novelist's problems. Among the critical essays that set forth the views of Henry James must be mentioned "Criticism" and "The Art of Fiction". A controversy with H. G. Wells whom inspite of their close friendship, Henry James differed brought about the airing of his views on literature and art.

The critical essays of Henry James collected in six volumes reveal him as being influenced by Sainte Beuve. As a mature critic he is seen to have developed a method of subtle sensitive impressionism like that of Walter Pater.

Henry James has a high conception of art. He did not regard art as a thing separate from life He was of opinion that life and art are inextricably fused and that it is "art that makes life, makes interest, makes importance......and I know no substitute whatever for the force and beauty of its process." True to this great awareness of this high seriousness of art, Henry James gave it a priestly devotion and spent all his energy in the service of art. He thought it unfortunate that the English novel upto his time had "no air of having a theory, a conviction, a consciousness of itself behind it—of being the expression of an artistic faith, the result of choice and comparison." He felt the need for active discussion of the rules of fiction, of technique. "Art lives upon discussion, upon experiment, upon curiosity, upon variety of attempt, upon the exchange of views and comparison of standpoints."

Of all art forms Henry James felt the novel to be the most magnificent. It offered to its devotee few restrictions and innumerable opportunities. "The other arts," he writes in 'The Art of

Fiction', "in comparison appear confired and hampered : the various conditions under which they are exercised are so rigid and definite.'" Fiction according to James demanded one thing primarily f om the writer—sincerity That James himself practised the art he had chosen as his own with the utmost sincerity is proof of the integrity with which he translated into act his percepts

About the functi n or the purpose of the novel Henry James has emphatic views. He was a realist, but not one of those realists who believed in giving in their books a piling up of drab details picked up from life At the same time he did not believe in the novel having no relevance to every day life. "The on'y reason for the existence of a novel is that it does attempt to represent life," he writes in *The Art of Fiction*. But he did not want to 'Copy' life in a journalistic fashion. The novelist is a'so an interpreter of life. While the power of observation is a faculty of paramount importance in a novelist, there is something far more important—"the power to guess the unseen from the seen. to trace the implication of things ; to judge the whole piece by the pattern : the condition of feeling life in general so completely that you are well on your way to knowing any particular corner of it." Hence his advice to a novice is. "Try to be one of the people on whom nothing is lost!" Exactness or truth of detail is important, but the true artist gives form to this exact picture of life. "The air of reality seems to me the supreme virtue of a novel—the merit on which all its other merits helplessly and submissively depend. If it be not there they are all as nothing. and if these be there, they owe their effect to the success with which the author has produced the illusion of life. The cultivation of this success, the study of this exquisite process, form, to my taste, the beginning and the end of the art of the novelist. They are his inspiration, his despair, his reward, his torment, his delight. It is here in very truth that he competes with life : it is here that he competes with his brother, the painter in his attempt to render the look of things, the look that conveys their meaning, to catch the colour, the relief, the expression, the surface, the substance of the human spectacle."

The themes of James's novels, of course come from life. He was a close observer of the social stratum in which he moved and his note-books were full of materials taken from actual life which awaited the expert handling of the writer. But having drawn his idea from real life Henry James went on to work it out into an elaborate web whose distinguishing feature was not superficial verisimilitude but design. Form was of supreme importance to him. Form was part and parcel with the material. Jame's admiration of Flaubert was based on the latter's fine blending of form and material. In "Notes on Novelist" he wrote thus praising the French novelist : "The form is in itself as interesting as active as much of the essence of the subject as the idea, and yet so close is

its fit and so inseparable its life that catch it at no moment on any errand of its own."

Henry James had a passion for order, design and unity. He disliked introducing into novels different points of view as this shattered the classical sense of unity. But unity of design was not compatible with division into component parts For instance in "The Golden Bowl" we have a unified study of a broken marriage, which however falls into two logical divisions—one section dealing with the conditions that brought about the rupture and the other presenting the attempt to cope with the situation thus created. In his insistence on design and unity Henry James felt he was doing a great service to the novel. for he believed that the novel so far was structurally chaotic. He thoroughly disapproved of the careless shifts in point of view from that of the first person to the third. He was also against the novelist letting his personality intrude into the novel at any stage. Detachment and complete objectivity are the things that he prized. Perhaps he learned the value of these from Flaubert. "In any case no novelist in English has so resolutely devoted himself to creating a work of art that is self sustaining or so completely effaced himself from its record. Shakespeare is not harder to find in his plays than James is in his novels. When the structure of a novel was completed, no scaffolding remained to remind the reader of the builder."* Henry James did not care also to point out a moral or to provide a handy guide for personal conduct. He scorned the idea that the novelist's chief function was to entertain by means of exciting adventures, amorous episodes, and comic interludes.

The old-fashioned distinction between the novel of character and the novel of incident is not accepted by Henry James. Neither was he inclined to accept Hawthrone's finely drawn distinction between the novel and the romance. According to him there are only two kinds of novels—bad novels and good novels, as there are bad pictures and good pictures : "that is the only distinction in which I see any meaning, and I can as little imagine speaking of a novel of character as I can imagine speaking of a picture of character. When one says picture, one says of character, when one says novel one says of incident, and the terms may be transposed at will. What is character but the determination of incident ? What is incident but the illustration of character ?"

"The Art of Fiction" remains a kind of landmark in the serious criticism of fiction. Its importance lies chiefly in the fact that here Henry James dismissed once and for all the age-old indictment of the novel as frivolous and immoral and established its importance as an art form. "There is no impression of life, no manner of

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* *The Rise of the American Novel.*

seeing it and feeling it to which the plan of the novelist may not offer a place : you have only to remember the talents so dissimilar as those of Alexandre Dumas and Jane Austen. Charles Dickens and Gustave Flaubert, have worked in this field with equal glory. Do not think too much about optimism and pessimism : try and catch the colour of life itself." His own life-long professional dedication to this art form justifies the high reverence he has for it.

EUGENE O'NEILL (1888-1953)

Q 109 Show how Eugene O'Neill brought about a revolution in American drama.

Or

Discuss the chief characteristics of O'Neill's plays

Or

Discuss Eugene O'Neill as a dramatist.

Ans 1. O'Neill's Contribution

In the barren land of American drama, Eugene O'Neill grew a beautiful pastureland. He is a meadow in the desert of American drama. Drama has always been the weak spot in American literature. Till the First World War no worthwhile play was written in America that had anything but immediate contemporary interest. From Thomas Godredy's *Prince of Pathia* (1767) to Rachel Grother's *He and She*, the record of American drama shows no play of literary value or prospect of permanence. No dramatist of the stature of any European dramatist such as Strindberg, Maeterlinck and Hauptmann had been produced by America. Eugene O'Neill's immediate predecessors—Clyde Fitch and Augustus Thomas – stuck only to the convention of the well made play, and no fresh breeze blew. It was O'Neill who proved to be a chief insurgent against worn-out dramatic conventions and the romantically banal, and established himself as the symbol of a renaissance that paralleled on the stage the so-called renaissance in American drama.

So O'Neill was a pioneer American dramatist. Before him the American dramatists wrote farce, comedy and melodrama. No greatly moving and powerful play was written. O'Neill wrote moving and powerful tragedies. His famous plays are : *The Hairy Ape*, *The Emperor Jones*, *Mourning Becomes Electra*, *Strange Interlude* and *The Iceman Cometh*. His other plays are *Bound East for Cariff*, *The Moon of the Caribbees*, *Beyond the Horizon*, *Anna Christie*, *All God's Children Got Wine*, *Desire Under the Elms*, *The Great God Brown*, *Ah Wilderness*, *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, etc.

2 His Themes

The theme of O'Neill's plays is man in relation to his society, his God and the Universe. The theme of *Strange Interlude* is the breaking up of a woman's character, because of the death of her lover in the war. The theme of *Mourning Becomes Electra* is sex, death and murder. It shows the consequences of the fulfilment of man's twisted desires. *The Iceman Cometh* is a modern morality

play which makes use of the ancient motif of the dance of death with its modern paradoxical twist of willed chance and detested catastrophe where each man kills the thing he loves because he cannot love enough. The theme of *The Hairy Ape* is man's belongingness.

3 Techinical Innovations

O'Neill experimented successfully with new techniques of drama. He is a major expressionistic dramatist of America. He intermixed naturalism and symbolism, suggestiveness and symbol. Taking his lesson from Strindberg he made use of expressionist style in his plays such as *The Hairy Ape* and *The Emperor Jones* Obsessed as he was with the thought of projecting the inner life and metaphysical ideas, he searched endlessly for theatrical means of this. He used interior monologue, speech on different levels of consciousness, asides as in *Strange Interlude*, and introduced the mask for startling effects. He went to the extent of making the part of his split protagonist in *Days Without End* played by two actors.

O'Neill also violated what John Gassner calls "the sacred right of the play-goer to discharge his obligations to the stage in two hours and a half of theatre attendance." His plays are of epic dimensions and through these O'Neill brought to the American theatre a spaciousness that was known only on the Greek stage where an Aeschylean trilogy kept the people spell bound for hours.

4. Representative American Dramatist

O'Neill is a unique, a representative dramatist of the United States of America. He is, to quote John Gassner, "the height and breadth of the American theatre...... Find fault with O'Neill and you find fault with the entire American stage; find merit in him and you find worth in its striving or straining towards significant drama. It is possible to single out American playwrights endowed with greater refinement and facility than can be attributed to him but none who made a comparable impression on the twentieth century. Chiefly as a result of his persistent efforts after 191 ·, the American drama actually entered the century and made contributions to world theatre that could be considered significantly modern."

5. His New Conception of Tragedy

O'Neill, like T. S. Eliot, went to the Greeks for inspiration. The ills of life seemed to him far complex to express through the photographic technique. He said, "tragedy, I think, has the meaning the Greeks gave it. To them, it brought exaltation, an urge towards life and ever more life. Like the Greek tragedy-writers such as Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides he saw humanity tortured and tormented in anguish. Like the great

heroes of Shakespearean tragedies his heroes also have tragic flaws as per Aristotle's definition of character. Like the plays of the Greeks, O'Neill's plays also have a serious moral purpose. His protagonists are neurocratic He has also a modern equivalent for the Greek concept of fate or gods. O'Neill's deep study of Freud and Jung made him discover the modern equivalent of the gods in the Unconscious. In *The Hairy Ape* the unconscious occupies the position of malignant fate and Yank has to struggle this and ultimately lose the fight.

In the Greek drama the struggle used to be between man and gods ; in the plays of O'Neill the struggle is now with himself, man's own past and future. In his foreword to *The Great God Brown* he states that the theatre "should give us what the Church no longer gives us—a meaning. In brief it should return to the spirit of Greek grandeur. And if we have no gods or heroes to portray, we have the subconscious, the mother of all gods and heroes." To O'Neill God, Fate, Mystery are all aspects of the subsconscious, and of the struggle of the conscious will to assert itself against the unconscious will.

6. Celebration of Life in His Plays

O'Neill conceived of tragedy as something that celebrates life. He says, "life in itself is nothing. It is the dream hat keeps us fighting, willing—living !" In his plays O'Neill has tried to work out this celebration of life. This was Neitzsche's view, and O'Neill agreed with him. The death of the hero, he felt must reveal the dignity, nobility and universality of his struggle even though from the beginning the struggle has been a futile one. In Greek tragedies, the order is symbolised in fate or the gods, in Shakespeare it is in the laws of 'nature' or in human justice or reason. The hero flouts this order on the stage by his action ; he dramatizes his struggle and with his destruction the order is restored. In the plays of O'Neill the violated order is that of the mind. This brings us to one of the most important aspects of O'Neill's tragedies —his exploration of the mind as a domain of intense tragic potentiality. O'Neill was doing in drama what the novelists of the stream of consciousness technique were doing in the field of fiction.

7. Hie Tragic Heroes

O'Neill's tragic heroes are modelled on the ideas of Freud and Jung They are the modern equivalent of the gods. Their actions proceed from the "collective unconsciousness." Pride is responsible for their tragedy, as they rely too much on their conscious ego, ignoring the tremendous power of the unconscious. This unconscious is equivalent to Greek gods.

8. Motif and Purpose of his Plays

O'Neill's vision of life was essentially tragic. He saw humanity

tortured and tormented and endlessly suffering. His plays, therefore, are attempts to explain human suffering and somehow to justify it. The result is not irony, but the classic two-fold justification of the ways of God or fate to man ; first that suffering and the very need to explain and symbolize it are the fountain head of human action and creativity ; and second that fated though he may be, man is ultimately a free and responsible agent who brings most of his grief upon himself through pride. This is the view of Doris V. Falk about O'Neill's plays. The ethics or moral purpose of O'Neill's tragic protagonists is to keep up an illusion about themselves that is deep-rooted in them. This moral purpose exists side by side with something that is directly its opposite—namely a desire to discover themselves. Often the protagonist of O'Neill unconsciously hates and rejects his real self and in its place substitutes a false self-image. This self-hatred and the consequent pursuit of illusion constitute the tragic flaw that destroys him. Sometimes neurotic pride is the cause of the hero's fall ; without it, for example, there would have been no downfall for Nina of *A Strange Interlude* and for Lavinia of *Mourning Becomes Electra*. This is also due to the impact of the Greek tragedy on O'Neill.

9. Introduction of Naturalism

O'Neill belongs to the family of American minds which included Frank Norris, Jack London and Stephen Crane. His plays show how interested he was in the theatrical revival in Europe and in the plays of such writers as Ibsen and Strindberg. O'Neill himself honoured Strindberg as his master and source. In fact there is much in common between O'Neill and Ibsen. Richard Hayes writes : "More than piety binds the two legendary solitaries. If Ibsen.........created the consciousness of modern European drama, then O'Neill is surely to be seen as his lonel est and most intrepid American Agent." Many of the qualities of Ibsen enumerated by Henry James—the absence of humour of free imagination and of style, have been attributed to O'Neill. The realism of Strindberg and Ibsen influenced O Neill tremendously. But it is not possible to attribute all the plays of O'Neill to one type of dramatic technique. He did not hesitate to make use of the resources of the modern theatre as developed abroad. Realism or naturalism was a development over-familiar to Europeans when O'Neill started to write. But naturalism was almost unknown on the American stage. It remained for O'Neill to introduce realism on to the American Stage. For this he had first to exercise from the theatre the genteel tradition that abounded in sentimentality. *Beyond the Horizon*, *Anna Christie* and *Desire Under the Elms* and a number of one-act plays belong to the realistic types.

10. Incorporation of Symbolism and Expressonism

But after this O'Neill got tired of realism for he became aware of the fact that in Europe realistic drama had its day and

had been supplanted by the more imaginative styles of symbolism and expressionism. Thus he turned to these two dramatic techniques bringing as it were, a second revolution in the American theatre almost simultaneously with the first. At this stage O'Neill commenced a series of experimentaion. *The Emperor Jones*, *The Hairy Ape* and *The Great God Brown* are the great results of these experiments and these plays caused O' Neill's inclusion in the group of "avante grade" dramatists But O' Neill was not inclined to uphold symbolism and expressionism in all his plays. He was unwilling to be the captive of any single style and was too original to stop with one experiment, however successful that might have turned out to be. After expressionism and symbolism O' Neill's attention turned to vaster and more fantastic patterns for he was not restrained by practical considerations. Thus he boldly went on to such mammoth dramatic compositions as *Lazarus Laughed*, *Strange Interlude* and *Mourning Becomes Electra*.

11 Greek Impact

In these plays he brought back to life many conventions of Greek drama ; like the chorus, the aside and the trilogy. *Mourning Becomes Electra* is an American version of the Greek trilogy of the murder of Agamemnon, the death of Clytemnestra and the nemesis that follows He has adapted the Greek story to the requirement of American setting. The Trojan war becomes the American Civil War and Agamemnon is General Ezra Mannon. Christine Mannon, Lavinia and Orin corresponds to Clytemnestra, Electra and Orestes respectively. But, the Furies of the Greek stage give place to psychological factors. Like T S Eliot whose poetic plays *Murder in the Cathedral*, *Family Reunion* and *The Cocktail Party* revived many features of Greek drama, O' Neill was greatly fascinated by the masters of Greek drama and the techniques they used.

It was not merely in form that O' Neill shows kinship with Greek dramatist. In his preoccupation with the tragic issues of life he resembles them The view of life that O'Neill airs through his plays bring to our mind the Greek dramatists' view of life. Like their world O'Neill's world is one of tragedy, sombre and unrelieved where Fate crushes man. It is only in play like "Lazarus, Laughed" and 'Ah ! Wilderness" that a hopeful note is struck. The delight that is derived from witnessing a play by O'Neill is like the delight imparted by the tragic dramatists of ancient Greece – AEschylus, Sophocles and Euripides It consists in watching noble characters forced to battle with an adverse destiny and fall victims of circumstances. The plays convey an intense sense of the dignity of man and yet of his significant want. The experience that the tragedies of O'Neill give is akin to the feeling of ennoblement which the Elizabethans experienced on witnessing a tragedy. They, like Greek tragedies evince a power that gives us the Catharsis which is the function of all great tragedy, and which is achieved by entering

into the lives of people apparently at the very bottom of the scale of existence.

12. A Gloomy, Terrifying Vision of Life

O'Neill's preoccupation with death and gloom makes him a kin of Webster and Ford the prominent Jacobean dramatists. O'Neill broods over death and there is in him a susceptibility to extremes of passion, will and affliction that one discerns in the Jacobeans. The ingredients of O'Neill's drama have been neatly summed up by Sinclair Lewis the novelist during his Nobel Prize address to the Swedish Academy : "And had you chosen Eugene O' Neill who has done nothing much in the American drama save to transform it utterly in ten or twelve years from a false world of neat and competent trickery into a world of splendour, feat and greatness, you would have been reminded that he had done something not to be neatly arranged in a study but as terrifying, magnificent and often quite horrible. a thing akin to a tornado, an earthquake or a devastating fire." It is O'Neill's vision of life as something 'terrifying and magnificent and often quite horrible' that makes his tragedies so powerfully moving."

13. Influence of Psychology

To this gloomy, terrifying view of life that O'Neill cherished he added a profound knowledge of psychology. The influence of Freud on O'Neill has been greatly remarked on It is obvious in *Strange Interlude* and *Mourning Becomes Electra* though O'Neill is said to have remarked that "too much Freudianism was read into the latter play" O'Neill employs in his dramas, the Oedipus-complex and Electra-complex that have been much discussed after Frued's analysis of these. In *The Iceman Cometh* there is some other Freudian idea acting as the vital psychological factor—the death-wish. O'Neill has made a remarkable attempt to dramatize subconscious emotions.The terminology of psychoanalysis frequently figures in the course of the discussions in his plays. John Howard Lawson discusses O'Neill and his treatment of psychology thus : "Psychoanalysis as a method of psychological investigation has no bearing on O'Neill's plays. His interest in character is metaphysical rather than psychclogical. He attempts a complete escape form reality; he tries to severe contact with the world by setting up an inner kingdom which is emotionally, spiritually independent " From Freud O'Neill also made use of the idea of a flight to the past. Many of his characters love to linger over the past to get back their past childhood. Emotion, in the plays of O'Neill is recognized as a vital force; but it is always on emotional drive based on the father-daughter, mother-son r lationship. 'His use of the Freudian formula serves to negate any conscious struggle on the part of his characters. Their passion is necessarily evil, because it is incestuous, yet it is unavoidable, because it is the condition upon which they are born His characters are emotional but sterile.' In no

single drama of O'Neill do we get an intense love relationship between man and woman which is creative or satisfying. Lavinia's story in "Mourning Becomes Electra" and Nina's pathetic fate in "Strange Interlude" illustrates these truths. Emotion, thus, in the plays of O'Neill is something negative, working towards the destruction of man. Thus O'Neill gives a psychological interretation to the question of Fate that looms large in Greek tragedies. Fate is interpreted by O'Neill as something neither entirely within man, nor altogether outside him. It is both in man and outside him; it works relentlessly towards his destruction. It paralyzes his will, and his emotions betray him. Thus the Greek idea of Fate is transformed by O Neill just as the avenging Furies of the Oresteia trilogy undergo a psychological reinterpretation in *Mourning Becomes Electra.*

14. O'Neill's Concern with Illusion

Another idea that haunted O'Neill the playwright and one which has appeared in his plays repeatedly and in various guises is that of man's illusions Helen Muchnic throws light on this aspect of O Neill in a comparative study of O'Neill's and Gorky s plays entitled *Circe's Swine: Plays by Gorky and O'Neill.* "Always concerned with illusion, O'Neill has presented it in many ways: in pictures of individuals pathetically or tragically frustrated because of some initial mistake they make about themselves or that others make about them; a in *Bound East for Cardiff. Before Breakfast, The Rope, Beyond the Horizon*...in symbols not of individuals but of man overwhelmed by the force of unconscious primitivism latent in him, as in *The Emperor Jones* and *The Hairy Ape*; in parables concerning the ethics of western civilization, as in *The Fountain, Marco Millions* and *Lazarus Laughed*, in psychological probings of man's soul as in *Desire the Elms, The Great God Brown, Strange Interlude* and *Mourning Becomes Electra.* Despite great variation in focus and interest, certain factors remain constant enough throughout the plays to make O'Neill's work appear as a continuous philosophic investigation of the riddle of falsehood at the core of life, in the process of which several partial solutions have been reached, but no definitive one as yet. His plays are eerie with the ghosts of terrible dissatisfactions and of desperate guilt, and their darkness is hardly relieved by a hovering conviction that there is power in love and that an ultimate beneficent grandeur exists beyond the groping and raging consciouness of man, for it is in tragedy itself that men are shown to have attained their desires." Emperor Jones dying in the splendid isolation he desired, Yank of 'The Hairy Ape' dying with the realisation that at last he belongs, Lavinia Mannon, O Neill's Electra shutting herself up from an outside world, thus dedicating herself to a self-inflicted punishment of a wrong, are examples of O Neill's characters attaining a kind of peace through tragedy. The death wish as pointed out earlier, plays an important

role in the plays of O'Neill. In *Strange Interlude* Nina explains: "we're always desiring death for ourselves or others. Our lives are merely strange dark interludes in the eternal display of God the Father !" O Neill's probing into the murky depths of character and into the strained and divided psyche has not been appreciated by some critics. Some feel that the Freudian and Jungian elements in his work are too arbitrary or schematic as in *Strange Interl de* and *Mourning Becomes Electra.* But it is generally felt that O'Neill enriched the drama with his insights and with the techniques of projecting them.

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Q. 110. "Eugene O'Neill s career as a dramatist is a long record of revolt and experimentation.''—Discuss.

Ans. Eugene O Neill's stature as a dramatist was summed up by *Times* in its laudatory obituary thus : "Before O'Neill, the United States had theatre : after O Neill it had drama." His plays are not "pretty or comforting : they thrash about in darkness to find a wild beauty in things that are violent and ugly. They are sometimes tawdry, sometimes terrible, but they are trivial." Having the making of a 'poet in him, his soul craved for something far more significant and far richer than mere realism. This led him into experiments with realistie-symbolistic drama. But soon he found that realism or naturalism is bound to be a failure in the theatre. He wrote : "It is only by means of some form of 'super-naturalism' that we may express in the theatre what we comprehend intuitively of that self-defeating, obsession which is the discount we moderns have to pay for the loan of life......."

His experiments exhibit a unity of high purpose rarely exhibited by modern playwrights. He belongs to no particular school ; he has tried to combine the best elements of the different schools of drama. He was "the first universally recognized world dramatist America produced" in some two centuries of th atre, in the western hemisphere. O'Neill set on to create "a new language for the theatre." His plays mark a new approach. This was not simply a question of new plots or subject matter, but of new techniques. His search for a new language led him into many varied manners of speech, realism, expressionsim, naturalism, symbolism, fantasy, and poetry. He used them alone and in various combinations.

O'Neill's absorption with the dark regions of the human mind led him inevitably to a never ending search for new techniques. In the first place O'Neill ignored the conventional limitation of the time of the play His plays are mostly mammoth affairs. He thought in terms of trilogies and nine play cycles. He usually has so much to say. And in his passionate desire to unfold the workings of the human mind dramatically he is apt to ignore the

violation of all time limits. Many of his plays are too long, and many of them including *The Iceman Cometh* and *Strange Interlude* could be readily compressed into a more reasonable running time O'Neill however had a tendency to shirk the task of selection and condensation. His genius was eminently suited to the form of Greek drama, that of the trilogy as is proved by *Mourning Becomes Electra*. In his plays like *Long Days Journey* and *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, O'Neill recognized the value of the Aristotelian principle accepted on the modern stage especially by Ibsen, namely that of concentrating the action in a day or a few days, with the past being filled in by exposition. In the other plays long stretches of time are allowed to elapse between the various acts of a play.

O'Neill avoided mechanistic methods of plot construction and tried in each case to adapt the techniques to the peculiar demands of the theme. For the exhibition of a single character O'Neill chose to experiment with the form monodrama—a type of play excellently suited for the purpose—in *The Hairy Ape* and in *The Emperor Jones*. In *Desire under the Elms*, O'Neill made use of a novel stage set, showing by means of the cross section of a house simultaneous actions in the different rooms. For the dramatization of his psychological or even philosophical insights O'Neill resorted to very interesting and daringly original devices. In several of his plays staged in the twenties O'Neill used masks. *The Hairy Ape, All God's Chillun Got Wings, The Great God Brown* are the most notable examples In his *Memoranda on Masks* O'Neill explained his conviction that masks would be found to be the 'freest solution' of the problem of expressing in drama 'those profound hidden conflicts of the mind which the probings of psychology continue to disclose to us." Then he posed the question vital to an understanding of the technique of his plays: "For what, at bottom, is the new psychological insight into human cause and effects but a study in masks, an exercise in unmasking ?' The mask as used by O'Neill was a way of getting of the inner reality of character. They serve also as the symbol of O Neill's preoccupation with concealment and discovery, a recurring theme in O'Neill's plays. If masks came in handy in 'The Great God Brown' to dramatize 'the divine man' O'Neill resorts to another device for the same purpose in *The Strange Interlude* Marsden, Nina, Darrell, Mrs. Evans all make use of abundant asides thus laying bare layer after layer of their minds. In *Days Without End*, O'Neill dramatizes the split between the two selves within one man, by making two actors play the two parts of the same man.

One of the great examples of O'Neill's mastery over the techniques of drama is found in *The Emperor Jones* one of O'Neill's most impressive plays. While Jones runs in panic through the darkness of the forest, there is heard in the background the drums of the rebellious natives who seek to kill him. The tom-tom beating first at the rate of normal pulse gathers momentum accen-

tuating the panic within the man and keeping pace with his psychological regression. The use of the tom-tom in this play like the whistle in *Bound East for Cardiff* is one of the most effective theatrical devices in the history of modern drama. In the last plays of O'Neill we find the playwright relying less and less on elaborate theatrical devices. His genius by then had recognised itself to be far above the need for such contrivances.

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Q. 111. Write a note on the language and style of O'Neill's plays.

Ans. O'Neill made incessant experiments in dramatic art with a view to discover an idiom in which he might express the human tragedy. "In all his major works," says Gassner, "O'Neill traced the course of a modern dramatist in search of an aesthetic and spiritual centre." His various experiments brought him international fame. But some critics believe that "consistency in style was never a part of O'Neill's strength." This view has not been accepted by Robert F. Whitman who says, "He was always exploring, always hoping to find a medium of communication that would satisfy his needs both as a dramatist and as a man. The search led him into strange ways, and down dead ends; but the diversity and violence of both his techniques and his subject matter tend to hide some of the unifying threads which bind together all his work" In his earlier work we find a synthesis of realism and romanticism. In the later plays he uses symbolism. In some plays he uses interior monologue, in some other he makes use of the mask.

O'Neill can use the dialects effectively for special effects. He also uses the telegraphic lingo for expressionistic effects. His language, however, is not as lofty as that of the Greek tragedies: it lacks their grandeur. It is without the rich poetic splendour of the Greek drama. His prose does not soar when it should but remains quite commonplace.

While the tremendous nature of O'Neill's genius and his inexhaustible dramatic inventiveness are generally acknowledged there is the feeling that he lacked "language" equal to the reach of his non-verbal powers. This, it has been pointed out by critics is the reason why O'Neill has been disproportionately effective on the stage and disappointing in print. Some of Eliot's techniques demanded an extraordinary richness of language which O'Neill failed to supply. This is most striking in the Electra trilo y. He was unable to write the exquisite poetry that Greek triologies have. He has made a significant comment in the "Memoranda on Masks", explaining why he rejected the plan to use masks in 'Mourning Becomes Electra': "Masks in that connection demand great language to speak—which let me out of it with a sickening

bump." O'Neill efforts to raise the language of some of the crucial moments of his play to a rhapsodic pseudo-poetic prose have not been very successful. In such plays one notices that an inadequacy of language hampers to a greater or lesser degree, the success of his dramatic inventiveness. But as long as O'Neill wrote about common life—of sailors and farmers and social outcasts—he managed his language well. He could handle the realistic style securely and it is perfectly suited to his conception and does not stand in the way of his achieving the desired effect. The dialogue in the last plays is powerful, often direc , and frequently endowed with a brutal though picturesque lyricism When he set out to be deliberately poetic, O'Neill failed. "Yet" writes Gassner, "it may be conceded that even then he could achieve a poetic effect of low degree through the full rhythms of his sentences, if not through cadences and imagery." This eminent critic argues that the deficiency found in O Neill language is not entirely the result of his lack of endowment but of the modern division between prose and dramatic poetry. "Those who press the charge of want of 'poetry' in the man should be reminded, moreover, that he got his 'poetry' as other modern playwrights have done not from verbal beauty but from the breadth and reach of his imagination, mood or feeling, and especially, from his theatrical—at times exaggeratedly theatrical - sense. If he was not felicitous in creating verbal poetry, he often created a 'poetry of the theatre'—this in effect of which a few examples are the tom-tom in *Emperor Jones*, the fireman's forecastle and the fifth Avenue nightmares of *The Hairy Ape*, the mask and transformations effect of *The Great God Brown*, the evocation of the farm-house and land in *Desire Under the Elms*, and the Greek colonnade, the chanty refrain, and Electra-Lavinia's tragic closing of the doors upon herself in *Mourning Becomes Electra*. It is clear that O'Neill never really became the great poet-dramatist that he wanted to be. He was described by some critics as "prose-Shakespeare." Yet there is in this realist-naturalist-symbolist-experimentist playwright a strain of poetry that makes him almost a romantic.

A discussion of O'Neill's style has to include mention of his indebtedness to the Irish playwright John Millington Synge. In play after play may be detected traces and echoes of Synge's language. It is not merely the features of Synge's language that O'Neill imbibed, but his very approach to drama, or his very philosophy of the dramatic language. In his preface to 'The Playboy of the Western World' Synge claimed that "on the stage one must have reality, and one must have joy ....In a good play every speech should be as fully flavoured as a nut or apple, and such speeches cannot be written by anyone who works among people who have shut their lips upon poetry." These words so deeply affected O'Neill that they may be taken as a summary of the plays of O'Neill. "In O'Neill's plays there is reality and there is joy, there is the reality

of life and the joy of life ; his vocabulary is rich with the richness of life and work, and his people have that wildness which civilization accentuates. His speeches are fully flavoured as a nut or an apple and they have the poetry of human endeavour and suffering" (Andrew E. Malone)

Q. 112. Comment on the modernity of O'Neill as a dramatist.

Or

Write a note on the modern element in the plays of Eugene O'Neill.

Ans. Undoubtedly the greatest playwright that America ever produced, O'Neill represents almost everything that is fundamentally modern about the American theatre. O'Neill's modernity lies both in the ideas that he dealt with and in the techniques in which he wrapped the ideas. A born rebel, O'Neill has been responsible for bringing about a revolt against middle class complacency and common-place realism on the American stage. The wide range of his experiments and his constant restlessness and dissatisfaction with forms once tried make him rank high among the avantgrade writers of today. It was not just the form of American drama that O'Neill began to modernize, but its very content. His avid cultivation of new ideas, his assertive individualism and his intense unease are expressions of the "lost generation." O'Neill discarded Victorian gentility; and his country's long tradition of puritanism, its go-getting opportunity. Instead he voices trends that are quite modern, such as lofty individualism and a careful probing into human psychology. As Gassner puts it, "His response to the vogue of depth psychology let him to modernize further both dramatic form and content by attempting to manifest subconscious tensions. The means he adopted for this purpose carried him into areas of experimentation which only venturesome playwrights dared enter and where only exceptionally adept ones could survive."

What makes O'Neill eminent among modern dramatists is not merely that he shares the modern interest in psychological exploration. He also makes use of current issues vital to the set-up of society in his plays. The question of racial discrimination and its effect in determining character figures prominently in *All God's Chillun Got Wings*. In this and in plays like *The Dreamy Kid*, *Emperor Jones*, O'Neill has depicted a wide range of Negro life. O'Neill was great because of his imaginative grasp of contemporary life. His plays are gripping because they depict that segment of life which the dramatist knows and with which he sympathizes. O'Neill does not rely on fantasy or far-fetched effects. Even his feeble plays make us feel that he understands the secret springs in the characters whom he portrays. His simple sailors and farmers

are thrillingly alive. It is this very quality of his characters, their convincingly genuine nature, their vitality that makes us experience the authenticity of a situation O'Neill's experience as a sailor stood him in good stead in his characterisation. In the forecastle he had known the sailors with all their superstition and their 'touching credulity concerning tomorrows. 'O'Neill cared deeply for the primitive types that appealed to writers such as Norris and Jack London, Hemingway, Steinbeck and Faulkner.

No one ever questioned the range of Eugene O'Neill's imaginative grasp of contemporary life. He touched in his plays at so many points the twentieth century American scene that he seemed for two decades a major spokesman of it, a campeer of all the exposers of "suppressed desires." *The Dynamo* was a dramatization of a cult of Henry Adams. The hatred of family life that seems to be a great feature of the time is dealt with in O'Neill's plays too. *Desire Under the Elms*, *The Robe* and above all *Mourning Becomes Electra* are dramatization of "what's wrapped and twists and eats into itself and dies for a life time in shadow."

The passionate intensity of O'Neill makes us think of Theodore Dreiser. O'Neill's passioned search for the meaning of life and the fact that he saw in the seamier, coarser and more tragic aspects of life dramatic possibilities which had been utterly ignored place him among the most important writers of the twentieth century. Despite the grimness and gloom of their word O'Neill's plays convey to the audience a powerful message. This is true especially of the last play 'Long Day's Journey into Night' which was posthumously staged. The play where "nothing happens", represents a day in the life of a family. But the simple setting and commonplace characters define O'Neill's vision of the word. The play epitomises the concerns of O'Neill—loneliness, the ideal frustrated by facts of life, the search for ultimate motive, the desire to "belong." The quest for identity, for the understanding of man is a theme that has been found in the great tragedies of the world and is as gripping today as it was in the time of the Greek playwright of the Elizabethans.

O'Neill's greatness lies in the fact that he has dramatized America's post-war experiences. His characters are American's with all the problems that the present-day throws in their faces. His treatment of both characters and situations is always in terms of twentieth century thought, even when the period chosen may be the remote days of the Civil War as in *Mourning Becomes Electra*

"O'Neill's plays are not important or revolutionary simply because they emphasize the grim and unpleasant aspects of American life. They are important and revolutionary because for the first time in the American theatre they reflect the post-war world,

the world in which most certainties—moral. ethical and to an extent legal—had given way to uncertainties."*

Q. 113. Examine the truth of the allegation that O'Neill's plays expressed and patterned too somewhat precisely after Freud and Jung.

Ans. In one one of his letters illuminating O'Neill's objective in dramatic writing, he has written : "I'm always trying to interpret Life in terms of character. I'm always acutely conscious of the Force behind life (Fate, God, our biological past creating our present, whatever one calls it—Mystery certainly) and of the one eternal tragedy of Man in his glorious, self destructive struggle to make the Force express him instead of being as an animal is, an infinitesimal incident in its expression. And my proud conviction is that this is the only subject worth writing about and that it is possible—or can be—to develop a tragic expression in terms of transfigured modern values and symbols in the theatre which may to some degree bring home to members of a modern audience their ennobling identity with the tragic figures on the stage." And it is to psychology that O'Neill turned for the transfigured modern values and symbols. Psychology assumes in the plays of O'Neill the role of the gods in Greek drama. In his foreword to the *Great God Brown* O'Neill says that the theatre "should give us what the church no longer gives us—a meaning. In brief it should return to the spirit of Greek grandeur. And if we have no gods or heroes to portray we have the sub-conscious, the mother of all gods and heroes". Such declarations and his practice in writing plays prove O'Neill's close relation to modern psychology. While some think that his leaning towards psychology has enriched the plays of O'Neill, others feel that it detracts from his stature as a playwright. In his book *Eugene O'Neill : The Man and His Plays* Barrett Clark has made the remark that O'Neill's plays were expressed and patterned somewhat too precisely after Freud and Jung. O'Neill has replied to this charge in these words. "Authors were psychologists you know, and profound ones before psychology was invented. And I am no deep student of psycho-analysis. As far as I can remember, of all the books written by Freud, Juug etc. I have read only four, and Jung is the only one of the lot who interests me. Some of his suggestions I find extraordinarily illuminating in the light of my own experience with hidden human motives." O'Neill's interest was in human nature and his dramas have tried to sound the depth of human passions. But there has been unfortunately too great a move in the direction of interpreting O'Neill as a disciple of Freud or Jung and many of

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*. Alan S. Downer in his talk entitled: "The Revolt from Broadway."

O'Neill's biographies and criticisms have been written by the psychologists.

It is O'Neill's conception of tragedy that drew him towards a profound exploration of the human psyche. O'Neill agreed with the greatest writers of the world that tragedy springs from elemental human passions and man's blind struggle with forces within himself which he cannot control. Modern psychology has given these forces specific names and definitions Knowing as he did, of the conscious and the unconscious it was possible for O'Neill to give a twentieth century interpretation to the problem of tragic action. The tragedies of Greek masters, AEschylus, Sophocles, Euripides have stressed the presence of *hubris* in the protagonist that destructive self-sufficieney or self-reliance that provokes the wrath of the gods and in Shakespeare we have the tragic protagonist led on inevitably to destruction by his tragic flaw. The pride of the tragic protagonist of the Greek theatre has its modern equivalent in that compulsion to attain the impossible which in a life situation causes destruction to the self and which may be called 'neurotic'. It is this neurotic pride that brings about the tragedy in the case of most O'Neill-heroes. We find it in the hero of *Ile*, and in Emperor Jones. Without this pride, the tragedy of Nina in *Strange Interlude* or of Lavinia in *Mourning Becomes Electra* would not have happened.

In classical tragedy lack of self-knowledge or a kind of blindness could also be the root of tragedy. The comment made about Shakespeare's tragic protagonist Lear—"for he hath ever but slenderly known himself"—is true about all tragic heroes to some extent and it is especially true of O'Neill's tragic heroes. All his tragic heroes blunder into disaster. And this is caused by the struggle between the Conscious and the Unconscious. To O'Neill, God, Fate, Mystery are all aspects of the subcouscious and of the struggle of each man to make the force express him, that is the struggle of the conscious will to assert itself against an unconscious will Often the protagonist is prevented from achieving self knowledge by the conscious ego rising like a barrier between him and self-realisation. Yank of *The Hairy Ape*, Robert the hero of *Beyond The Horizon* and the protagonist of *Anna Christie* and of *Straw* all seek to belong. In *Ile* and in *Gold* O'Neill has shown how a false self-image built upon pride wreck so many lives. And in Bartley pride and his greed for gold we have the psychological counterpart of all the Faust legends—the individual selling his soul to the devil for a promise of unlimited power. Emperor Jones also exhibits this lust for power.

O'Neill of course has made use of some of the psychological theories brought forward by Freud and Jung. An important idea of Jung that appealed to O'Neill was that of the collective Unconscious. The existence and the power of this collective Unconscious O'Neill has worked out in *Emperor Jones*. Broadly speaking the

theory of the Collective Unconscious means this : mind of a given man contains ideas from the Collective Unconscious which come to him simply by virtue of his membership in the human race, as well as ideas inherited from his own specific race, tribe and family. His mind contains in addition unconscious ideas and symbols arising from his unique personal unconscious Finally from this personal unconscious emerges his own consciousness, his ego. The *Emperor Jones* shows how under the great stress and strain of the situation, the character of Brutus Jones Emperor of a West Indies island, breaks down. The conscious ego breaks down and there emerge his personal and collective unconscious. In the beginning he speaks in courage and confidence and in utter contempt of "dem po niggers", steeped in superstition. But lost in the forest the ghosts haunt him and his veneer of culture and sophistication and freedom from superstition is gone. The three ghosts that appear are from his personal unconscious. These consist of the ghosts of the people whom he murdered emerging from an old and buried Past. And the three remaining ghosts are from his Collective Unconscious. The slave dealer, the witch doctor and the stone altar represent the Collective Unconscious of the Negro race of which he is a member, the Primitive Uncouscious which unsuspected lurked in him to appear at a critical moment.

It is in *Mourning Becomes Electra* that O'Neill has worked out his theories based on Freudian ideas. The play is a version of the Orestes story which as relevant to the twentieth century as The *Oresteia* was to Athens. O'Neill has adapted the story and has given sexual motivation to every twist of the plot. The incestuous attraction within the family are all explicity stated. Lavinia's fondness for her father and jealousy of her mother, Orin's intensely passional attachment to his mother and the insane jealousy which makes him kill her lover are illustrations of Freud's much discussed ideas of the OEdipus complex and the Electra complex. Several critics feel strongly that if O'Neill had been satisfied merely by hinting at these things it would not have mattered much. But O'Neill instead makes the characters themselves express it. Christine tells her daughter Lavinia :

"You've tried to become the wife of your father and the mother of Orin ! You've always schemed to steal my place."

Christine herself admits that her love for the young man Adam Brant has something to do with his resemblance to Orin. Orin says he flirted with a girl just to make his mother jealous. "It is this pat admission of their Freudian impulses", says Bamber Gascoigne in *Twentieth Century Drama*, "Which makes these characters ludicrous. Once again O'Neill is signposting, using a modern, shorthand, writing from outside." John Gassner, the veteran of the theatre also criticises the play for the same reason. "There was more to the play than the transcription of Greek matter

into American terms. O'Neill it is true did not differ from the Greek tragedians in concerning himself with Fate and the working out of the family curse, the "domestic Ate" in the story of a New England Brahmin family. But it was his intention to go much farther and translate fate into modern terms, an enterprise already started before him by the late nineteenth century naturalists who founded an equivalent for the Greek idea of fate in the rudimentary scientific concepts of determinism by heredity and environment. Locating the determinism more directly in the human psyche, O'Neill adopted the Freudian emphasis upon the sexual instinct, especially the much publicized OEdipus complex...... ... Despite intensely dramatic moments and the general power of the play it is felt that schematisation was carried too far in the play." The characters have been deprived of tragic stature because O'Neill in interpreting their characters has relied too much upon psychoanalytical facts. They have become more of clinical cases than tragic figures.

In *Strange Interlude* also Freudian ideas are explicit. Professor Leed's possessive love for his daughter. Nina's unconscious dependence on her father, the final acceptance of Marsden's protective love, as it represents a father-figure. Marsden's own clinging to his mother are all cases illustrating Freud's theories. One of the characters in *Strange Interlude* says :

Here Freud had a lot to account for.

Thus there is o sameness in the behavioural pattern of O'Neill's characters that makes Gascoigne comment : "Looking back over the plays, with all the men putting their heads in their mistresses' laps and calling them mother. one can validly wish that the charaters would stop behaving within their given frame work, with such predicable conventionality."

O'Neill's interest in psychology has affected his technique also. The use of masks and of soliloquies proceeds from O'Neil's preoccupation with the secret processes of the mind and his desire to find some satisfactory way of giving these processes dramatic expression. O'Neill believed that what we see of a person is only a mask that life has forced him to wear and that beneath the mask there is another being who remains a stranger to the world and whose presence is not sometimes admitted by himself O'Neill believed that life is a struggle to exist as masks among the masks of the living.

In conclusion it must be said that O'Neill's preoccupation with psychological factors have given his plays a peculiar relevence to the twentieth century and a popularity that is undeniable. It is more to Jung than to Freud that O'Neill seems to be drawn, though both Freud and Jung helped to suggest to him the modern equivalent of the gods—the unconscious. Though many of

the terms and ideas of the Jungian system of psychology are used by O'Neill in his plays, the most important one is that of the unconscious operating as an autonomous force, existing independent of the individual, but expressed through him. In Jung's opinion that pride causes tragedy by making man rely too much on his conscious ego, ignoring the tremendous power of the unconscious, he resembles the Greek attitude. And O'Neill's tragedies when they depict this struggle between the conscious and the unconscious and the sovereign sway of pride, come near to the splendour of ancient Greek tragedies and of the fine tragic plays of Shakespeare. O'Neill adapting Jungian ideas seems to be giving us the advice that man must follow a middle path that arrives at a compromise between the unconscious urges and the Conscious ego. If to follow the dictates of the Conscious ego at the expense of the Unconscious is to court tragedy, to give in entirely to the unconscious would also be disastrous as it would entail a withdrawal from reality and action. Certainly O'Neill's powerful searching of the hidden motives and passions of the conscious and the unconscious has lent a great dignity to his plays and made them powerfully disturbing to the audience and readers.

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Q. 114. Give a critical evaluation of O'Neill's play "Strange Interlude."

Ans. "Strange Interlude" is the most important play of O'Neill's later period. It exhibits O'Neill's genius as a playwright and illustrates many of his peculiar methods of plot-construction, characterisation and other techniques.

The play as John Gassner puts it is an expression of O'Neill's cyclopean intentions. It is a typical work of O'Neill because of its hugeness and rambling nature. There are nine acts and the time stretches over a period of several years. O'Neill in the play violates the Aristotelian rule of the unity af time, most flagrantly, for in the first act we meet Nina Leeds as a young girl whereas the ninth scene concludes after giving us a portrayal of Nina "so contentedly weary with life !" preparing to die in peace, after bidding goodbye to her son and his wife.

The fist scene is laid in the library of Professor Leeds home in a small university town in New England. Nina, the daughter of the professor is seen haunted by the memories of her lover, Gordon the brave handsome hero who went to the war and got killed. Nina's troubles spring form her brooding over the fact that she had refused to compel him to make love to her before he left. Emptiness now stares her in the face and she describes herself as "pregnant with nothing but a loathing." Most of the loathing is directed against her father, as Nina feels that it was the thought of her father's disapproval that prevented her from giving herself to

Gordon before he left her. The one who is there to witness the anguish of Nina and the pained dejection of the professor is Mr. Marsden whose mind's workings exhibit the most toruturous tangle consisting of his fondness for Nina and his adoration of his mother. Nina decides to leave home so that she can somehow "find a way to give myself to Gordon still that I must pay my debt and learn to forgive myse f."

Nina works in a hospital for wounded soldiers. She has worked out a way for what she thinks is her salvation. She gives herself to any soldier who wants her and thus feels she is atoning for her past. The professor dies in the meanwhile, and the second act takes us again to the professor's home where Marsden awaits the coming of his Nina whom he longs to console But when she comes she is not alone. She is accompanied by Doctor Ned Darrell, a man who knew Gordon and who immediately arouses Marsden's suspicions. Marsden wonders in agony if Nina loves Darell Sam Evans a simple young man head over ears in love with Nina assures Marsden that the relationship between Nina and Darell is purely professional.

Nina and Evans get married. But there is no enduring happiness for Nina. Darkness looms larger over her The thought of her soon naving a baby elates Nina who is not willing to announce the news to even Sam, lest she be forced to share her child with him. Mrs. Evans dashes all Nina's happiness to pieces by letting her into the family secret. There has always been insanity to Sam's family and Sam's father succumbed to the curse partly because of his anxiety and fear for his child. Mrs. Evans explains how if she had no Sam, she could have erected a protective wall of love around her husband that would surely have warded off insanity from him. She then tells Nina how essential it is for Sam's sanity and Nina's happiness that Sam remains without children. She urges Nina to go right ahead and have her share of happiness by somehow managing to have a healthy baby. She explains to a bewildered Nina : "Being happy, that's the nearest we can ever come to knowing what's good ! Being happy, that's good ! The rest is just talk Sammy's got to feel sure you love him—to be happy. Whatever you can do to make him happy is good—is good, Nina ! I don't care what !"

Act four shows the materialisation of this suggestion Sam's apparent failure to have a child shatters his ego and affects his work. He has a haunting sense of failure. To Nina he becomes increasingly weak and cringing. Darrell visits them after a long period of absence. As Nina becomes obsessed with the possibility of Darrell's giving her a healthy child Darrell himself becomes aware of Nina's charm and of his own reaction to it. They discuss the experiment with seeming objectivity and detachment As the matter is settled and the decision to keep Sam in the dark is made

Nina exclaims, "I shall be happy for a while ! I shall be happy, I shall make my husband happy !"

The experiment works. In the fifth act we fino Nina triumphantly feeling the stirrings of life within ner. But something she had not bargained for happiness. She is passionately in love with Darrell and wants to marry him. She wants to confess everything to Sam Darrell is unhappy about having betrayed Sam's trust in him He runs away from the place and the problem facing him. Sam's personality undergoes a tremendous transformation with the realisation that he is going to be a father.

Part two consisting of four acts depicts the developments. Nina dotes on her baby. Sam finds in his child an added incentive to make him work hard and thus become a greater success. While Marsoen plays the role ot father and looks on the domestic felicity of Evans and Nina, Darrell turns up again. She is shocked by Nina's suggestion that they should carry on the affair. He calls her calculating and threatens to tell Sam everything Nina filled with happiness in having all these men around her says to herself "My three men !...I feel their desires converge in me !...to form one complete beautiful male desire which I absorb ...and am whole.......they dissolve in me their life is my life......I am pregnant with three ! husband ! lover ! ...father ! .. and the fourth man ! little Gordon ! he is mine too ! that makes it perfect !' But she detects signs of trouble Little Gordon, her son who has grown into a young boy poses a threat to her happiness and security because he suspects Darrell and Nina of being too fond of each other Darrell is shaken by his love for a son whom he cannot acknowledge or claim as his own. Only Sam enjoys the bliss that ignorance affords Nina's feeling for him alternate between a fierce protectiveness and helpless contempt She prays "Oh, Mother God, grant that I may some day this fool the truth..."

In Act eight we see Gordon, no longer a boy, keeping up the athletic traditions of his name-sake the illustrious Gordon Shaw. The occasion of the race in which Gordon participates sets off a series of conflicting passions within the various characters. Nina fiercely proud of her son is equally jealous of her son's young love for Madeline. She in hysteric rage and jealousy proposes to tell Madeline all about Gordon, but Darrell steps in just in time to stop her from making the colossal confession. Marsden senses the truth and quietly gets the statement from Nina. Darrell is in a great fix torn once again between his jealousy of Sam for having everything his longing for his son's affection, and his jealousy of the successful Gordons. He even wishes Gordon's defeat. Evans is untouched by conflicts of any kind. He is, inspite of enormous success the soul of humility and attributes all the greatness of his son to Nina and to the first Gordon. At the height of the excitement he has a stroke. Darrell and Nina once again resolve to work for Sam's happiness.

The subsequent death of Evans plunges Gordon into depths of despair. The thought of the intimacy between Darrell and Nina drives Gordon to a Hamlet-like frenzy. A confrontation takes place between Gordon and his real father and unable to control himself Gordon hits Darrell Gordon immediately apologizes, while Nina, helpless, looks on. Darrell feels wretched with the longing to claim his son, and confides in him everything. But Gordon's assertion that he thinks his mother 'the best woman that ever lived' makes him change his mind. Gordon goes away with Madeline. Darrell and Nina decide that they would be acting foolishly if they married—"our ghosts would torture us to death." Darrell urges Nina to marry Marsden if she wants peace. As the roar of Gordon's plane is heard Darrell yields to an irresistible impulse and shouts to the sky : "You're my son Gordon !" Having said this he feels relieved, "Good-bye Gordon's son !," he mutters and he go s back to his cells. his science. Nina turns to Marsden. There is something about her that suggests that her grip on life has weakened She is content with life with Charlie. She sums up her struggle for happiness as futile. "My having a son was a failure wasn't it ? He couldn't give me happiness. Sons are always their fathers." She assesses life as "strange dark interludges in the electrical display of God, the Father." There takes place in her a reversion to childish moods. "You're so restful Charlie. I feel as if I were a girl again and you were my father and the Charlie of those days made into one. We'll pick flowers together in the aging afternoons of spring and summer won't we ?" Thus looking forward to the comfort of growing old in peace she falls asleep. Marsden feels a serene peace descending on him for he feels that "dear old Charlie ..who passed beyond desire, has all the luck at last."

The play thus covering a very long period and requiring considerable time for performance is one of the most profoundly moving of O'Neill's plays. There is nothing fantastic about it purely though there are mystic overtones in the play, despite the fact that its plot structure is rational The play affords the Catharsis that all great tragedies impart, though the play is not a tragedy in the usual sense of the term. There is throughout the play a deep sense of gloom, of fierce foreboding, and a threat of horrors that never materialize. But the conclusion is serene, and the characters their passions spent, have worked out their way to a 'calm of mind', a peace that passeth understanding.

O'Neill's insight into human psychology, his great understanding of the passions that sway human lives are nowhere else better illustrated than here. Freudian ideas underline the relationship between characters. Nina's finding in Charlie, a father image. Marsden's mother-fixation, Nina's jealousy of Madeline are all easily recognizable as Freudian. Nina's deliberate refusal to face reality her escape into a world that is unreal and as unstable as the house built on shifting sand are very fascinating

studies of human psychology. The asides freely used by all the characters in the play make the psychological interest of the play intense. The Playwright has revived this device which had been banished from drama, purely for the purpose of d splaying the various facets of human mind, its conscious and sub-conscious levels. The asides in the play are the equivalents of a device that O'Neill tried in some other plays—the mask.

In characterization O'Neill has achieved great success. Nina, Marsden, and Darrell are convincing characters, drawn with sure and deft strokes. They are meant to illustrate O'Neill's philosophy of human life and destinies, his mistrust of emotion his recognition of uncontrollable human emotion as the agents of man's destruction and his theory of the lack of an all fulfilling love between man and woman.

This play which has epic dimensions and qualities of a large impressionist and expressionist novel is capalbe of giving to the audience a rare ecstasy Joseph Wood Krutch gives us an illuminating criticism of the play : "What Mr. O'Neill has done, is to take a story which is not only longer than the ordinary story of a play but one which invites, or rather demands, that brooding subtlety of treatment impossible in the ordinary dramatic form, and he has made out of it something which not only holds every one of our faculties employed but remains, like one of the greatest modern novels, to tease the mind with the sense that there will be, for a long time to come new discoveries to be made in the memory of its labrinthine passages. Without the many innovations of his method this particular story could not be told, these particular effects could not be obtained upon the stage, and he has therefore conquered a new province for the theatre. He is, for example, the first to dare to make full use in the drama of tha introspection without which it would be impossible to imagine the existence of a large part of modern literature, and he is the first to employ there our newly won knowledge of the unconscion,...in such a way as to make it cast over all the events that uncertain, flickering light which it sheds in the life around us. Yet no enumeration of such specific or detailed originalities will serve adequately to indicate the originalities of the play, and it can only be said that *Strange Interlude* conquers a new province for the theatre. In the past our dramatists have been lazily content to say that most of the things which gave modern literature its excuse for being were "not suited to the stage." Mr. O'Neill has succeeded in making them dramatic."

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Q. 115. Discuss the theme of O'Neill's play, "The Hairy Ape."

Or

How far "The Hairy Ape" is a play of 'belongingness' ? Discuss and elucidate

Ans O'Neill has envisaged *The Hairy Ape* as a modern counterpart of Greek tragedy. He himself has remarked : "The subject here is the same ancient one that always was and always will be the one subject for drama, and that is man and his struggle with his own fate. The struggle used to be with the gods, but is now with himself, his own past, his attempts to belong." It is on the concept of this edifice thas the play has been built.

The Hairy Ape is the tragedy of a man who is the stoker on an Atlantic liner, a man who is out of place or land. The play-wright takes us first to the stokers' pit where the daughter of a rich capitalist, Mildred, calls Yank a beast, which is rendered by his friends into 'the hairy ape'. Stung by it Yank broods over it. Indignnatly he feels that Mildred is also a beast. Yank lets him-self be worked up by the ship's socialist orator, and gets arrested for drunkenness Having been informed in prison that the Industrial workers of the world desire to blow up the great steel works owned by Mildred's father, Yank goes to the office of that organization and offers his services for the job. When he is driven out of the office, he wanders to the New York zoo and talks to the big guerilla. Feeling satisfied that he has conveyed his philosophy to the guerilla, he releases the animal. He holds out his hand to the guerilla and the beast enraged by the mocking tone of the man springs at him and grips him in a murderous hug. This man who had always wanted to belong, feels happy that while he dies he at last belongs.

According to O'Neill, *The Hairy Ape* was inspired by the story of a Stoker named Driscall. The story of the play therefore is concerned with one of the Stokers called Yank whose satisfact-ion with own permeated strength is shaken by accidental contact with a female passanger, Miss Mildred Douglas, representing a world of which he is totally ignorant Having reached the port, the S oker sets out t investigate this new, unknown world Soon he discovers that he is not recognized as a human being by the more elegant of its denizens. He is thrown out of the ha l where a group of self-conscious proletarian is meeting and finally he is crushed to death in the arms of a caged ape whom he has tried to hail as his brother. At this stage the dramatist passes his sarcastic remark that the cage perhaps is the play Yank belongs to. So the theme of the play is modern man's alienation and his quest for identity. Yank, Mildred and other characters are symbols of soul troubled in a physical world.

Through this play the palywright wanted to expose the injustice and cruelty of society. The play treats a a burning social problem – that of the Stokers who are not even r cognized by the wealthy upper class. Yank is not recognized as human by the more elegant denizens ; he is not recognized as an animal either by the ape in the iron cage. In tead of getting sympathy, he is put behind the bars and is lastly knocked down by the I. W. W., an organization of the workers. He is upset and goes to the zoo to seek fraternity with monkeys and apes. But even there he is not acceptable He opens the cage of the guerilla to get him free, but the guerilla wraps his arms around Yank and crushes him to death. The fate of Yank is the fate of all workers. Yanks represents the worker class whereas Mr Douglass represents the industrialist class.

Sense of Belongingness in the Play

Secondly, the theme of the play is Yank's sense of belongingness. Yank confesses that he belongs to the steel in sociological terms. The play is an attack on capitalism. Though the constitution of America guarantees truth, honour, liberty, justice and brotherhood of man, yet people like Yank never get these.

The action of the play revolves round "BELONGINGNESS" and "LOSTNESS". Yank says : "Hell ..I'm steam and oil for de engines; ...I'm smoke ...I'm de muscle in sted, de punch behind it ! We run the whole workes. All the rich guys dat think day're somep'n, day ain't nothin' ! Dey dont belong—.We belong, don't we ? We belong and dey on't. Dat's all "

At another place about the woman he says, "I'll show her. I'm better'n her if she on'ly new it. I belong and she don't, see ! I move and she's dead."

The word "BELONG" frequently occurs in the play. While the hairy ape (Yank) was still content with his lot, he was content because he had faith that he was essential to his ship and that ship had meaning. But when he lost that faith, he could not understand. He ceased to think of himself as a man and despised himself as an ape. First Yank belongs to the ship, then he belongs to the world at large but after the visit of Mildred he belongs to no where. It is in the end that he realizes that he belongs to the world of apes and guerillas. But his death symbolically gives the idea that he actually belongs to nowhere, that he is is a no man in the no land where nobody has a regard for him. Perhaps he is nought, a total negation, a negative personality.

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Q. 116. Discuss The Hairy Ape' as an expressionistic drama.

Ans. Expressionism was imported from Europe to America, it was in vogue in Germany before the emergence of O'Neill. Expressionism demonstrates the artist's dissatifaction from naturalims or realism which expressed only the surface reality. The expressionist wants to portray and project through outer symbols inner reality. Expressionism to drama is what the stream-of-consciousness is to modern fiction. The expressionistic play-wright presents the conditon and working of the mind of his characters, and wants to show their anger, sadness, sorrow, faith, sacrifice, etc. Characters to him are thus symbolic types; inner reality, man's mind and consciousness, his soul and conscience are his themes.

Strindberg was the father of the expressionistic drama. According to his directives the expressionist imitates the disconnected; for him time and space do not exist; characters split, double, multiply, vanish blur, solidify and clarify. Consciousness reigns above all. Characters are dreamers; the play is woven ou; of dreams. There are no scruples, no laws, no congruities. There are neither judgements nor exhortations, but merely narration. The expressionistic drama is philosophical drama; it takes place in the mind of the characters. It is not an i-realistic but para-realistic; it is the expression of the characters' consciousness. It deals with meta-reality. In the phrase of J. W. Marriott, "It is like an X-ray photography."

In the expressionistic drama, the dramatist presents the soul of man in the form of external symbols. His characters use meat-phors. He uses figures which are obscure. In it there is no place for photography. The characters burst into song and speak into poerty. Little attention is paid to the form. Dialogue too is not realistic. It employs devices such as soliloquies, heightened language, asides, masqes, pantomimes, choruses suggestive scenery, costumes, lightening, sound effects for giving outward expression to thoughts and emotions of characters.

O'Neill himself says about the xpressionistic drama: "As I understand it, expressionism tries to minimize everything on the stage which stands between the author and the audience. He strives to get the author talking directly to audiece. I used that thing in The Hairy Ape."

The Hairy Ape is indeed an expressionistic tragedy. It has all the features of an expressionistic play. It is the expressionistic drama of modern industrial unrest. It shows the late 19th century conflict between science and spiritual chaos. The heor of the play is busy with the search for identity. Yank is a symbol of a class. Like Brutus Jones of The Emperor Jones, he symbolizes the primitive, the animal like in man. Both Mildred and her aunt are symbolic of artificiality. The hero Yank like the old Adam is lost.

He has lost his sense of identity and belonging; he hardly knows who he is, and here he belongs to. He belongs neither to the world of human beings, nor to the world of animals. Yank's guilt lies in his being born at all In this he is a symbol of man who has lost his old harmony with nature. Yank can't go forward; so he tries to go back. This is what his shaking hands with the guerilla means. But he cannot go back. The guerilla kills him. Thus the animal proves to be more helpful to Yank than his brother Man. Death seems to be the only solution to the problem of aliena ion. Since social reform is not possible nor can it be a possible answer to modern man's predicament, the play holds no hope for man The man of today is brutalized by machine. He may be the architect of the modern civilization of steel but in the process of evolution of this civilization, he also has become steel and his sensibility has become deadened.

The first scene presents Yank, a stoker on a trans-atlanatic liner having a great faith in himself; also, an equally great sense of "belonging" to the stoke-hole and the engine. He identifies himself with the steam and smoke and steel: "I'm smoke and express trains and steamers and factory whistles ...And I'm what makes iron into steel! Steel, dat stands for the whole ting! And I'm steel—steel—steel! I'm de muscles in steel, de punch behind it!" As such he rejects Paddy a ' dope dream" of the past when "a ship was part of the sea, and a man was part of a ship, and the sea joined all together and made it one." Yank has no sympathy even with song, and Long who damns the capitalists who have dragged them down. Yank silenced him by saying, "we belong and dey don't." Yank readily accepts man's new situation in the industrial world. Then, suddenly, Yank's illusion that he is "part of de engine, the moving forces behind it" is shattered, and he thoroughly confused. His faith in the world is shattered when Mildred, a scared, sickly girl, confronts Yank and calls him "the filthy beast." He is insulted in the very heart of his pride. He is disillusioned and begins to feel that he no longer "belongs." He goes out of the ship and tries to assert his individuality, his right to "belong," by getting some vague kind of "revenge". But he is faced with the world where 'belonging' has lost all vitality and become merely going through the proper motions, where he can have no significance, because nothing has. He is rejected everywhere he goes. He goes to the I. W. W. Meeting and offers to blow up the factories, steamers because he now knows that it was the steel which caged him and that he had never really "belonged." But he is thrown out. In the last scene Yank reaches the zoo and creeps close to the guerilla. He opens the cage. The guerilla gives him a murderous hug and walks off. Though O'Neill ends by saying, "And perhaps the Hairy Ape at last belongs," one is left with the feeling that this species of hairy ape doesn't even belong to the cage.

Thus like a true expressionistic play *The Hairy Ape* is a drama of despair, emptiness and disillusionment. The play depicts man's inability to save himself through an act of will or an act of love. Yank feels that his guilt lies in his being born at all. To quote Doris Alexander, O'Neill "writes to destroy that status quo, but he sees no hope for doing so. The only answer Eugene O'Neill can find for "every human being" is death. *The Hairy Ape* then, presents a profoundly pessimistic social philosophy which rejects entirely the status quo, but sees no answer for man in a better society, and no hope for destroying the existing society."

Q. 117. "O'Neill has used irony as a strategy in 'The Hairy Ape'." Discuss.

Ans. Irony may be defined as the use of words to express something other than, and especially the opposite of the literal meaning. It is an incrongruity between the actual result of a sequence of events and the normal or expected result. There are different kinds of ironies : irony of situation, irony of fate and verbal irony. O'Neill is the master of irony ; he himself calls his tragedies "ironic tragedy". *The Emperor Jones* uses all the three kinds of ironies.

Yank's isolation is disturbed because of the crippling tyranny of organization. The capitalists and the proletariats, the incendiarists and the pacifists, the State and the society, the jail and zoo merge themselves into a symbolic spectrum of impersonal revenge thwarting man's search for belongingness. The arrangement of these juxtapositions is ironical in itself. As a consequence, Yank assumes a motiveless malignity against everybody including himself.

Yank, trying to find peace and solace from the excruciating metabolism—of metal and flesh in the mechanized world, goes back to the animals ; but, trapped as his flesh is in steel again, he becomes the prisoner of his own humanity. Those who call him the ape are themselves apes ; what an irony it is that the whole world despite all its progress is still an animal world !

Even in the title of the play there is implicit irony. This sense of irony in the term of 'ape' goes on haunting the whole play. In the sub-title of the play "A Comedy of Ancient and Modern Man", there is irony again. It is a Comedy in the sense that God's in his heaven, and everything is wrong with the world, Satan is laughing at God's creation. The audiences expect the play to be a comedy but it turns to be a ghastly tragedy. In the play the ancient (ape) and the modern (man) meet and embrace, and in the final scene irony becomes explicit when the real ape embarrassing the human ape not only emphasises the basic identity of man and animal but also the essential animal-like qualities of a modern man.

In characterization also there is a touch of irony. Mildred regards the stokers as wild beasts, and Yank as a hairy ape. Long regards all the rich men going to the church as beasts. Long calls Mildred 'a blooded cow'; Yank calls her a cat. Thus all the characters in one sense or the other are beasts.

At one place in the play, Yank is asked by the Policeman to go to hell. He in fact goes to hell. Is it not an instance of ironoy? Yank, hairy ape, tries to behave like a human being, for thinking is a human quality; he tries to think. He says: 'I'm trying to t'ink" and his subsquent posture of Robins'. The Thinker has an ironical effect. Despite all his thinking and gift of intellect and reasoning, he belongs to nowhere; though the whole world is his yet he belongs to no place, he is neither man nor animal. Then what is he ? What an irony ?

The greatest irony in the play is, therefore, in the theme of the play.

There is irony in the setting and atmosphere of the play. For paddy the life of the Stoker moving about in the ship was no substitute for normal family life, but for Yank this mobile ship on the wide expanse of water was more than a home since it gave him a chance to feel that he was running it, that he alone was responsible for the onward movements of the ship, that he belonged to it. But in the end we come to know that Yank's thought was a mistake.

So irony in the play is pervasive, progressive throughout the play. There is irony in the metaphoric ape, in the statements of Yank, in the statement of Mildred, Long and other characters, in the heart of the rich people, in the bell of the church, in the whole world. All human beings are double dealers–more cunning and curel than the animals.

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Q. 118. Write a critical appreciation of 'The Hairy Ape'.

Ans. 1. Introduction

The Hairy Ape is one of O'Neill's best plays. It was produced in the year 1922. On its first performance a critic, Alexandor Woolcott called it "a bitter, brutal, wildly fantastic play of nightmare hue and nightmare distortion." It was also hailed as a vision of the poet's Inferno'. Search of man's identity for self was thougt to be its theme. It was an attack against the American capitalism, for it compels man to lose all connection with life and compels him to lose his idenity. Julius Bab calls it "a tragedy of the proletariat". O'Neill calls the play "a comedy of ancient and modern life". In a letter to the New York Herald Tribune (1924), O'Neill wrote, 'The Hairy Ape was propaganda in the sense that

it was symbol of man, who has lost his old harmony with Nautre. . ."

The play is a piece of social satire and propaganda. It deals with man's quest for identity. It is a study in disintegration of the modern civilization.

2. The Theme of the Play

The theme of the play is man's struggle with himself, his effort to find for himself the place to which he belongs. The play is a tragedy of a man who is out of place or land. The wealthy people, the capitalists do not recognize the workers as human beings; they regard them as beasts. But the fact brought out by the play is that they themselves are the beasts. Thus the play is an attack on capitalism. The action of the play symbolically revolves round "BELONGINGNESS and "LOSTNESS".

3. 'The Hairy Ape' as a Social Satire

'The HairyApe' is basically the piece of social satire. The social revolutionists regard the play as a strong protest agains the brutalization of the proletariat. Some critics regard it as a piece of propaganda. It is a condemnation of the whole structure of machine civilization rather modern civilization. As a social satire the play describes a vast gulf between the rich and the poor, the capitalist and the labour, the steel factory owner and the half-fed, half-clad workers. The play raises the slogan of treating the stokers or workers as human and not as Hairy Apes. This is done through the character of Yank.

4. Expressionistic Technique in 'The Hairy Ape'

'The Hairy Ape' is an expressionistic drama on the pattern of Strindberg's dramas. It uses symbols; it deals with the inner consciousness of Yank who is a symbol of suffering man who is lost and does not belong to anywhere. It uses dots and elipses; its characters are symbolic, its language is also like that of the expressionistic plays.

5. Pessimism in the Play

The Hairy Ape is considered to be a piece of pessimism. Even those who put forward sociological interpretation of the play find that the stoker Yank is dehumanized by the Industrial growth, and he has no hope of redemption. Yank, the hero of the drama, is a pessimist out and out. He is the victim of machine civilization. He had no care, no anxieties until he is faced with Mildred Douglas. Since then he begins to think about his own real status in the society. The inevitable result is frustration and his death during his discovery of his belongingness. He goes t Fifth Avenue on a Sunday morning. He notices that the Church goers pay no heed to him. His search for identity gets a jolt there. He uses abusing

words for them. To which the reply of the gentry is, "I beg you pardon." He is sent to jail for detaining a gentleman.

In the jail, Yank hears about the I. W. W. through the newspaper. He desires to be a member thereof. The secretary enlists him as one, for which he takes half a dollar from him. Thereafter he is knocked out of the I. W. W. office. This is another deep frustration for Yank, as the following passage may make it clear :

Yank : *Say, were do I go from here ?*

Policeman : *Go to hell.*

To overcome his disappointment Yank goes to seek his hell. He is totally rejected by mankind. He goes to the zoo to develop brotherhood with the ape He calls the guerilla brother. It is with the feeling of brotherhood that he opens the gate of the caze and the guerilla kills him No man bewails the sad death of Yank. If he has any one to shed tears on his death, they are the chattering monkies. What more can be pessimistic than this dismissal picture of Yank's life painted by the dramatist.

6. Mysticism in 'The Hairy Ape'

There is also a current of mysticism in the play. There is a mystical touch in the theme, that is, the sense of belongingness The hero at least goes to the elements such as earth and waters where he belongs to. According to Richard D. Skinner, "No one has understood better than Eugene O'Neill that the soul at war with itself belongs to nowhere in this world of reality. The soul ...seeks to escape from its own creative power sings in mystery below the beast... in *The Hairy Ape* we have a restatement of the theme in the rough and inarticulate regions of the soul ending in death through the embrace of the beast." The play is a play of hell. Yank becomes a symol of the soul in utter desolation. The tormented soul is to find place only in death.

The play does not concern itself with mere external problems in Yank's life. It is also concerned with certain higher values. Yank's search for identity is a secret for real human existence. Doris V. Falk suggests that there is some note of existentialism in the play. Man is really very much lost His need to belong is the basic need of humanity. As soon as he belonged, he has abdicated his manhood, has ceased to be an existence and becomes a passive vegetative being at the mercy of forces outside himself and beyond his control. All other forces such as society, religion, state, tradition have been created by men themselves. They have no existence of their own except by virtue of men's existence. He is in actuality therefore free from all outside authority in the determination of his fate, he is also the lonely wearer of her terrifying responsibility for himself and the race. He has nothing to blame

for his failure but, himself. All men ultimately belong to themselves; all have to die.

7. Characterization in the Play

Though there are very few characters in the play, yet they have been fully developed. It was in the older days that dramatist gave evidence to individual. But the modern dramatist does not pay so much attention to individualism. That was so with Ibsen and Galsworthy. So is the case with O'Neill. The expressionists have little concern with the photographic method of characterization. They have nothing to do with individuals. They write about capitalism, industrialism, etc. The personages of the modern dramas are devoid of individuality. Most of them are types. The main figure of the play is Yank. He is brought up in poverty. He is illiterate. He has all hustle and bustle and no intelligence. He prides in his energy and in his class. He is a symbol and a type of a man being crushed by environment. Other characters such as Paddy, Long, Mildred and her aunt are also drawn in an impressionistic manner. According to Doris Falk, O'Neill draws his characters as recommended by Aristotle.

8. The Morality Element in the Play

The Hairy Ape has some element of the morality plays of the medieval England. In fact, it is a morality play in the expressionistic genre. The Morality plays have abstractions and allegorical characters as the dramatis persona; the characters thus are symbolic of certain virtues and vices such as Justice, Mercy, Sin, Death, Gluttony and so on. The thoughts of men are personified. The purpose is to inculcate certain moral lessons. The themes are religious. The subject is generally the summoning of everyman by death ; and the moral is that nothing can take away the terror of the inevitable summons but an honest life and comforts of religion. For example, the famous morality play, *Everyman*.

The Hairy Ape has all these characteristics, and like the *Iceman Cometh* is the morality play of modern everyman. As stated by Doris Alexander, "*The Hairy Ape* presents an extremely negative view of the state of mechanized America, where the worker best adjusted to the system is a 'hairy ape'. and where the 'Capitalist Class' is even more terribly dehumanized, for it has lost all connections with life, is simply a procession of gaudy marionettes." *The Hairy Ape* purports to convey that 'both government and religion are devices for maintaining the status quo. The Church substitutes political conservation for christianity, susbstitutes bazaars, methods of making money, for a concern with the meaning of life and death. Government is equally at the service of the marionettes. On the legislative side, it is exemplified by the windy oratory of Senator Queen, glorifying the status quo and denouncing with ignorant terror any threat to it is like the I W.W.

On the enforcement side, it is exemplified with the police who function to keep the workers from distubring the wealthy. On the whole, the State, is pictured in The Hairy Ape is a device for dehumanizing its citizens, and for preventing chance."

The Hairy Ape is a morality play because of its structure and plot-construction, because there are only eight scenes not very well knit, characters are types and representative of abstractions. Yank, the hero of the play, is O'Neill's Everyman. Just Everyman shows the solemnity of Christian faith, similarly The Hairy Ape shows the solemnity of death in the cage.

To sum up, 'In creating a hero engaged in a struggle representative of a class, the expressionistic ylaywright became the late descendant of the creator of she morality play of the fifteenth century. Not concerned with the vices and virtues of the medieval religionist, the expressionist substitutes for them the dynamic concepts of contemporary civilization–brotherhood, economic equality, communism, fascism, democracy. For the Devil, he substitutes materialism in one form or another; and for God, the life force or clan vital of Bergson. His hero, never-the-less, remains Everyman, ever engaged in a contest for survival, the terms of which are the fundamental issues of the present age. The experessionist has allied himself with or perhaps even fortified, the whole contemporary movement of allegory in art, expressed in terms of symbol and recapitulating the theme of 'journey,' which originated long ago in the Odyssey and two civilizations later became the dedieval morality play epitomized in Everyman."

10. The Atmosphere

The Atmosphere in the play is that of fear and terror. Fantasy abounds. There is little action which takes place on the stage. There is no place in the traditional sense. The real action takes place in the mind of the characters.

11. Language, Diction and Animal Imagery

The dramatist follows the expressionistic technique. He uses realistic detail. The play employs the rhythm of the dialogue and conversation. At times many voices mix up to produce a sense of crowd or chorus. The uneducated characters use the dialects of uneducated people. The language is simple : it tries to reflect mental thoughts through images and symbols. Animal imagery is used by the dramatist for symbolizing the theme of the play, exposing the situation in which characters are caught and laying bare their inner-self. Yank is a personfication of brute energy. The term 'hairy ape' occurs and recurs in the play. Yank on several occasions, makes ape-like nosies and gestures. He yells like an ape. At Mildred's visit and her meeting Yanl, Padday remarks as if Mildred had seen a great hairy ape escaped from the Zoo. At this Yank first grims horribly and utters: "Hairy ape! so dat's

me, huh ?" Then bursting into rage he yells : "Yuh skinny tart ! Yuh white-laced bum, yuh ! I'll show yuh who's ape !" In his calmer moments Yank thinks that Mildred is no human being ; she too is an ape. The ape imagery is carried on through Long who also identifies man with ape. Yank considers prisonsers apes and the cage a zoo. Later when prisoners ask him who he is, he cries defiantly, "I'm a hairy ape, get me ?" In his conversation with the Secretary of the 'Industrial Workers of the World' also, Yank calls himself 'the hairy ape'. In the last scene he calls the guerilla "Brother".

As a matter of fact everybody in the play is a beast In the beginning the strokes in the fireman's room of the ship are making all sorts of noises, shouting, cursing, laughing, singing, confused and baffled like a beast in a cage. To Mildred also the strokers appear to be beasts. She is unable to bear their sight. Similarly to Long the rich people congregating for the service in the church appear as "the bleedin' swine," and "the bleedin' parasites". Mildred who has insulted the strokers by calling them filthy beasts appears to Long as 'the bloody cow' and to Yank as "some dead ting de cat brung in" Thus the play is remarkable for animal imagery, and its title 'The Hairy Ape' is most appropriate.

12. Use of Irony in the Play

The Hairy Ape is an ironic tragedy. In it the words express something other than their literal meaning. The play in the ironical sense justifies the ways of God—or fate—to man. There is irony in the subtitle of the play : "A Comedy of Ancient and Modern Man". The play is a grim tragedy ; the playwright calls it a comedy. The man unconsciously calling himself the ape really becomes an ape, the brother of the Guerilla. The ancient (guerilla) and the modern (man) are synchronized together. Numerous examples of the use of irony can be given from the play.

13. The Weakness of the Play

The greatest weakness in the play is its unimpressive ending. Another defect is the fusion of various elements such as dialogue, scenery, intellect, emotion and spirit. This fusion is somewhat yoked together by violence. The play is somewhat depressing and enervating. Symbolism of the drama is also full with an error of the judgement. It gets out of the control in the closing scenes of the play.

Q. 119. Discuss 'The Hairy Ape" as a morality play.

Ans. (Please see section 8 of the Answer to Question No. 118).

Q. 120. Discuss the theme of 'The Emperor Jones'.

Or

Discuss various theories regarding the theme of O'Neill's 'Emperor Jones'.

Ans *The Emperor Jones* is a study of panic and fear prevailing among the half-civilized Negros. "The play deals with the colourful and dramatic career of Jones. former Pullman porter, now self-styled emperor of an island. who claims that he is invulnerable to any but a silver bullet. Fully prepared for an uprising of the people he has tyrannised, he escapes to the tropical forest as the sound of tom-tom in the distance indicates that the revolt is gathering strength. But night has come sooner than he expected and he loses his way in the forest, where in a series of terrifying visions he recapitulates not only the main events of his life but also the primitive history of his race. His end comes when he is killed by the silver bullets shot at him by the rebellious natives."

Different interpretations and views about the theme of *The Emperor Jones* are available. According to Edwin Engel, the playwright deals in this play with the story of the failure of science and materialism to supply a substitute for the withered God. So is the opinion of R F. Whitman. In the opinion of some other critics such as Doris V. Falk the theme of the play is man's progress towards self understanding, for Jones's hopeless flight through the forest is not from the natives at all, but from himself, the fundamental self from which his blind pride and its self image have so long separated him, and which, inevitably, comes into its own The progress of Jones is a progess in self-understanding. till one by one his affectations drop off and he finds his real self. In other words, the play is a story of man's escape from the civilized success to primitive terror which lies deep in him.

According to S. K. Winther, in the forest through which Jones travels, ' the froces of heredity and environment crowd in upon the consciousness of the Emperor until he loses his regal nature and tears away the trappings of his assumed grandeur. One by one they disappear, and as he becomes more and more naked. he becomes more and more a Negro criminal, tortured by primitive fears of the dark. In the end he loses the battle, conquered, but not by the physical strength of the natives, for they did not even change their position. All they did while Jones circled wildly through the forest was to beat their drums He was destroyed by the forces of his past. It was not the natives that barred his way to freedom ; it was the strong medicine of his Negro heritage "

Psychologically speaking, the theme of the play is the destruction of an individual by two conflicting levels of consciousness – the id and the super-ego.

Q. 121. Discuss The Emperor Jones' as an expressionistic play.

Or

Critical'y evaluate O'Neill's expressionistic technique as used in 'The Emperor Jones'.

Ans. Expressionism is a new technique of drama developed in the twentieth century as the stream-of-consciousness technique is a new technique in fiction. It was first used by Strindberg in his plays. Expressionism became a theatrical movement about the period of the First World War. O'Neill was deeply influenced by it. Expressionism attempts to present a theme in a realistic style with a symbolic setting. The aim of the expressionistic dramatist is to express subjective emotional experiences as opposed to the recording of impressions derived from the external world; he is profoundly in erested in psychology. He tries to show what is happening to the soul of man. Expressionism was deeply influenced by the p ychological theories of Freud and Jung in the exploration of the psyche of the protagonist.

In *The Emperor Jones*, the dramatist presents the anguished and fevered brain of Brutus Jones; he shows the feeling of panic and fear in the breast of a half-civilized Negro. Emperor Jones is the victim of the personifications of his lonely fears in the forest. It represents the breakdown of a Negroid mentalitiy under the stress of fear and fatigue The play is a study of the psychology of a man when he is haunted by his past crimes and the memory of racial unconscious.

Brutus Jones was a bold and brave exploiter who could enter into the forest alone. But gradually he became an abject figure, as he was scared by some hallucination in the forest. The hallucinations which haunt him are his personal memories of his primitive past, of racial injustice heaped upon him. These are the personal memories of him as Pullman porter, of a Southern slave auction in which he is for sale, a slave ship in which Negores are being brought from Africa, and finally of a witch-doctor who demands Jones' sacrifice. In an agitated state of mind he shoots at each of the visions, and ultimately he is killed by the silver bullets fired at him.

As the play is an expressionistic one, the playwright has used symbols too. The silver bullet is the symbol of that supersti ion by which the dishonest rich have made the world believe that their very riches could save them from the revenge of their victims, and that only one of their own sphere of inquiry could meet them on equal grounds. The silver bullet to Jones is also the symbol of the white man's mask under which he goes on practising lavery on the Negroes. Further more "The edge of the forest is an extensive symbolization of both the glory and horror of his freedom, of both its terrifying patience and his sensuous isolation. The flight is

frpm himself, and the imitated values of the white man are only a temporary defence against unbearable reprisals of human freedom. Unknown forms of fear and terror emerge from the forest shades, and the power of balckness haunts him injuring his pride and crippling his will. He descends through the successive levels of the super-ego, ego and personal unconscious until he descends into the darkling malestorm of his racial unconsciousness with an atavistic directness" (Dr. Raghavacharyulu).

The expressionistic drama does not deal with the individuals so much as it deals with concepts such as capitalism, socialism, communism, industrialism, etc. *Emperor Jones* is a tragedy of an outcast whom capitalistic civilization has excluded from society : it is a criticism of the capitalistic civilization of the white men, including its utilitarian attitude towards religion.

Expressionistic plays are by and large loose in their structure. They are made of a series of short scenes with stylised or symbolic settings intended to reveal the inner significance. The play has a symbolic setting, but it has better and greater unity of plot than is seen in expressionistic plays of other writers "After the first scene, the action occurs between dusk of one afternoon and dawn of the following day in, or on the edge of, the Great Forest The successive episodes are synchronized with Jones' revolver, the chamber of which contains approximately as many cartridges as there are scenes ; as the gun is discharged, the scene changes, approaching the point where the sixth bullet, the silver one, coincides with the completed reversion to savagery. The beating tom-tom, like the steamer's whistle in *Bound East for Cardiff*, also serves us an important unifying factor, symbolizing as it does the pervasive and inescapable presence of the primitive. Together with the revovler, it governs the inexorable movement towards the primeval, spatially and temporally. For the tom-tom beats in the camp of the 'bush niggar' to which Jones is helplessly drawn, and it beats in Jones' body, representing the primitive blood which charges through his arteries. Beginning at a rate corresponding to the normal pulse beat and not only family heard, it becomes perceptively louder and more rapid as Jones becomes increasingly terror stricken, as his visions are regressively aboriginal as he approaches the camp of the 'bush niggars'. When he is finally killed with a silver bullet, the tom-tom instantly ceases."

In characterization the expressionistic playwright substitutes symbolic types for individual human beings. This causes a change in his dialogues also. He does not attempt to write realistic conversation. In an expressionitic drama dialgoues are used to reveal the pre-speech level and disjointed inner thoughts of the characters. This is just like the use of the stream-of-consciousness technique used by the modern novelists such as James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Richardson in their novels. "In *The Emperor Jones* O'Neill has used realistic dialogue only in the

first and the last scenes and in the remaining six scenes instead of realistic dialogue the dependence is on monologue, and what happens inside the mind of Jones. It is because of the use of this expressionistic technique of a mono-drama, the action of which occurs within the infected mind of the single character."

The end of the expressionistic plays is pessimistic and tragic. Like *The Hairy Ape*. *The Emperor Jones* is also a tragedy. It ends with the death of hero. The final scene is really very tragic and gruesome.

Q. 122. Bring out the symbolism of 'The Emperor Jones'.

Ans. *The Emperor Jones* is an expressionitic play. The expressionistic dramatist seeks to solve the problem by representing the soul of man in the form of external symbols. He uses metaphor, fable or allegory. He produces figures moving obscurely on a darkened stage or personifying good or bad motives. He gives words to unseen voices to express the secret thoughts of a man's mind

Like his other plays, O'Neill's *Emperor Jones* follows the expressionistic technique and makes use of symbols. Emperor Jones himself is a dual symbol. First, he is a symbol of a Negro clamouring for freedom, a slave seeking release from the burden of a white man, secondly,he is everyman's soul aspiring for self-understanding. He is dark which becomes light enough, and having become light becomes dark once again. His journey through the forest is symbolic of soul's quest towards self-realization and self-understanding. The silver bullet is the symbol of the light that will provide salvation to soul. Crudely speaking, the silver bullet is the symbol of that superstition by which the dishonest rich have made the world believe that their very riches could save them from the revenge of their victims, just as Jones had made the native believe that he could be killed only by a silver bullet. The silver bullet is also the symbol of the white man's mask under which he works. It is the symbol of his pride of release from bondage, the fetish of his particular pride. The Great Forest symbolises the glory and horror of man's freedom; it also symbolizes his patience and sensuous isolation. The beating tom-tom symbolises the pervasive and inescapbale presence of the primitive. The tom-tom beats in the camp of the 'bush niggars' to which Jones is helplessly drawn and it beats in Jones's body, representing the primitive blood which passes through his arteries.

In *The Emperor Jones* the objectification of the contents of the character's haunted mind functions as a protracted symbol of fate in the shape of the biological past. The madness of the fear-obsessed Jones demonstrates that man is the sum not only of his own past exprériences but also those of the race, a notion that is

based upon the assumption of a physical continuity between ancestors and descendant.

The crocodile stands for the evil of the self. (Doris V. Falk). In killing it Jones has killed himself. According to Falk, the flight of Jones through the forest is not from the natives, but from himself. "The progress of Jones is progress in self understanding, it is the stripping off of the masks of self, layer by layer, just as bit by bit his emperor's uniform is ripped from his back, until at the end he must confront his destiny—himself—in nakedness."

"In the play the Negro is the symbol of displaced superstitious humanity, of innocence and violence, of elemental simplicity and primal humanity. His blackness, his primitive African ancestry, his life-pattern of pursuit and flight are of special interest in the play, but *The Emperor Jones* cannot be taken as O'Neill's contribution to the study of the Negro problem. The play is less concerned with the Negro problem than with the ultimate meaning of man's life in the mysterious universe confronting him.

"Jones is a symbol of man's vain boast of power. He is not a Negro but a human representative with all the weakness and strength of sons of Adam. Symbol and psychology merge well in his character. In him the dramatist has not presented a realistic picture of a negro character. He is like Yank in *The Hairy Ape*, fundamentally a man and his experiences are true of the white man as well as the black."

O'Neill is influenced by Jung in the formation of symbols in *The Emperor Jones*. O'Neill, however, is not a psychologist. He is a great artist and a dramatist. He does not altogether reject external reality and detail. He provides delight and entertainment too.

Q. 123. "As pure theatre, 'The Emperor Jones' is one of the best of all the O'Neill's plays, though most of it is only a dramaric monologue." Discuss.

Or

What do you understand by the term 'dramatic monologue'? Describe how O'Neill has used 'dramatic monologue' in 'The Emperor Jones'.

Ans. *The Emperor Jones* is a sustained dramatic monolgue. Like the soliloquies in drama some poets such as Tennyson and Browning use dramatic monologues in poetry. In a dramatic monologue a speaker reveals his character and situation to another person present before him. Etymologically the word is made of 'mono' (of one person) 'logos' (speech). What O'Neill have given us are soliloquies designed as dramatic monologues which are a

novel experiments and are a fine combination of a modified variety of the stream of consciousness techniques with expressionism.

Except the first and the last scenes the whole play, *The Emperor Jones* has been conceived as a sustained dramatic monologue. Psychological abnormalities such as hallucinations and fear complex are created with the help of the monologues. Jones shies at the smallest sounds. He is continuously seen talking to him-elf in order to get rid of fear From scene two to scene seven, O'Neill continues to use the dramatic monologue.

"In scene two we find Jones in the grip of an extremely intensified fear complex. He is continuously talking to himself in order to get rid of the nervousness of fear to which he has become subject owing to the woods and the threatening beat of the tom-tom He has miscalculated the route which he should have taken and when he looks for the white stones under which he had hidden his food, he finds that they have disappeared. This makes him even more nervous and the strain of his strenuous journey of three hours begins to tell upon him Finaliy he is overcome by the pangs of hunger and has the horrifying hallucinatory vision of the *Little Formless Fears* squirming upward towards him. Throughout this period, except for this hallucinatory vision which is a figment of his overwrougfit mind, Jones is alone on the stage, and the nervous fear to which he is a victim, is conveyed to the audience in a dramatic manner with the help of a monologue."

"......In Scene III we find a retrospective dramatic monologue in which Jones imagines that he is seeing the ghostly figure of the negro Jeff whom he had killed in a skirmish over the gaming table. This figure is nothing but a hallucinatory apparition conjurred by the over-wrought brain of Jones. He addresses it directly and tries to talk to it. Finally, not finding any response, he gets nervous and fires at the apparition with furious rage. The mom nt the smoke clears away he finds that he is alone in the forest"

In Scene IV, he has another hallucinatory vision which makes him cry out to Lord Jesus. His guilty conscience plays an equally important role. He has the vision of that white prison guard who had whipped him across the back and whom he had killed in a vicious fit of passion. He addressed the figure at the guard directly and fires point blank at his back. Then the whole vision is blotted out and he stands alone in an enshrouding darkness.

In Scene V, again there is the use of the dramatic monologue. We see Jones praying to Lord Jesus in a repentant mood. His imagination carries him back to the days when slave trade was practised and he has a hallucination in which he finds himself in the company of the common slaves who are about to be auctioned. When as the auctioneer is in the act of ticking him off, and the

purchaser is in the act of paying for him, he, all of a sudden, gets out of the hypnotic trance and addressing to both of them directly fires at them with such rapidity that the two shorts are almost simultaneous.

In the sixth and seventh scenes the dramatic monologue merges into the interior monolgue of the stream of consciousness as practised by James Joyce, Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolf. Jones imagines that he has already been sold as a slave and finds himself on board playing at the oars like a common galley slave. The pathetic wail of the slaves in which he also joins is symbolical of the bottomless pit of despair into which he has fallen, and he has no hope of being saved.

Lastly, in the VI scene, the unconscious associations in Jones's mind carry him to the original home of his ancestors into the dark and dreadful jungles of Africa. There is a horrifying hallucinatory vision he joins in the cronning and the dancing of the Congo Witch-doctor. The Doctor tells him that he must offer himself as a sacrifice in order to appease an angry god. Jones then has a vision of a crocodile with wide open jaws. Jones approaches the crocodile hypnotized by its green eyes. But then the whole vision disappears, and Jones lies with fear to the ground.

Hence it is true that *The Emperor Jones* is a sustained dramatic monologue.

ARTHUR MILLER (1915-)

Q. 124 Write an essay on Arthur Miller as a dramatist.

Or

Discuss the main characteristics of the p'ays of Arthur Miller.

Or

Evaluate critically Miller as a modern dramatist

Ans His Output

Miller is a contemporary dramatist He belongs to the expressionistic schoool of drama, which explores through outer symbols and impressions the inner state of mind. He is one of the five internationally well-known dramatists of America (O' Neill, Wilder Tennessee Williams, Miller and Edward Lee) He has insisted that courage, truth, trust, responsibility, and faith must be the central values of men. His major plays are *All My Sons*, *Death of a Salesman*, *The Crucible*, *A View from the Bridge*, *The Misfits*, *After the Fall*, *Incident at Vichy*, and *The Price*.

His Concept of Tragedy

Miller is a tragedian. He writes social tragedy. But his social tragedies are different from those of Shaw and Galsworthy. In his tragedies both the individual and the society are responsible for the individual's tragedy. His concept of tragedy is essentially modern and hence it is different from the classical view. He envisages tragedy as a serious drama of the modern average and ordinary man in the modern situation——individual surrounded by the environmental forces—the family, the society and the state. Tragic heroes in the modern tragedies of our time, according to him, should not be kings or oustanding personages but ordinary human beings.

Miller s tragedy is the combination of the Greek and the Christian tragedy. The function of tragedy is to reveal the truth concerning society. Whereas to the Greek dramatists Fate alone was a power stronger than any other, to Miller God and Fate are secondary to Society. Environment and heredity are a shaping force in modern tragedy of Miller. So in Miller's plays man is seen as the product or slave of his surroundings. The tragic feeling is invoked in us not by terror and fear but by a character's readiness to lay down his life to secure his personal dignity.

As a Social Dramatist

Miller is a social, or a socialistic dramatist. He conceives that society is inside of man and man is inside of society. But he fuses the social and the psychological in his dramas. According to Raymond Williams, Miller has restored social criticism to the

drrma, and has written on such contemporary themes as the social accountaoility of business, the forms of the success—ethic, intolerance and thought control, the natu.e of modern work-relations. His dramas deal mainly with man's relationship with his family and society. The relationship between a man's identity and the image that society demands of his is a recurring theme in his plays. Each of his heroes is i volved, in one way or another, in a struggle that results from his acceptance or rejection of an image that is the product of his society's values and prejudices. As a socialist he is more of a humanist than of a Marxist.

His Realism

Miller has brought realism back to the theatre. This is his greatest contribution. His is, however, a social realism wooing psychology on one side and rhetoric on the other. His drama revolves round the family to wear the robes of realism. Events in his plays have a realistic basis. He studies man in the actual and existing environment of family or society. His characters are real, life-like people. His method of yoking past and present together is near the psychological reality. M ller's idiom is also realistic. His characters talk like the real Americans of today; they use a language we should like to use in their situations. His realism is based on the thesis that man is at best the sum of forces working upon him and of given psychological forces within him But his reali-m is tinged with romanticism, and sometimes with sentimentalism.

His Dramatic Technique

In Miller's plays we come across a hybrid of the social, the tra.ic and the psychological. His purpose is to examine human nature. He makes a synthesis between the subjective and the objective between surface of experience and cogent emotional life. He also embraces symbolism. But symbolism with him is not so deep rooted and recur ent and dominating as in Synge. His symbols are simple. His plots, themes, characters ane dialogues are realistic. Because of his interest in and acceptace of expressionism, Miller does not ignore the emotional and the psychological along with the physical and the social. His language is simple, colloquial, contemp.rary American Engl sh He uses a great variety of accents—Irish, Swedish, German, Sicilian, Slavic barbadon, Yiddish, Puritan, Brooklyn, etc Miller uses rhetoric devices frequently. He creates effect by repetition. His plays also contain self-conscious oratory. Sometimes Miller uses comfortably ungrammatical and comic idiom.

Other Features of His Plays

Miller's plays give an awareness of what living in our times involves. He is tired of a theatre of sensation. His tragedies are the consequences of man's total compulsion to evaluate himself

justly According to Miller, tragedy depends on man's willingness to sacrifice himself in his fight against environment : the pathetic is achieved when the protagonist gives himself off to a much superior force. He has been influenced mainly by the depression of his times, by Ibsen, Cheknov and Dostoievski and the German Expressionism He has also accepted the rhetorical, the symbolical, the real, the natural and the social. He does not believe in art for art's sake His characters are real, life like and lively. He has focussed upon a single subject—"the struggle ...... of the individual attempting to gain his 'rightful' position in his society and his family. Miller's usage is simple, colloquial and contemporary. He uses apt metaphors and images His dialogue is most telling, when it works by implication, not by explication. His are the compact and well knit plots He maintains the three dramatic unities of time, place and action

Miller combines in him common speech, poetic expression, ancient power to understand the anguish of soul, ideas, self-justification by the hero, brilliant and pointed dialogue, rich imagery and metaphors, and minimum of symbolism naturalism, expressionism in the mould of realism He also mixes the tragic, the social, the psyenological and the rhetorical Shaw deals with the intellectual, the social, the moral ; Eliot with the moral, the religious : Tennessee Williams with the psychological But Arthur Miller tries to deal with all of these—the intellectual, the social the moral the religious and the psychological.

His Shortcomings

Miller as a dramatist has some shortcomings too. There is a lack of humour in his plays. He does not explore a character fully. His plays give an impression of a hybrid of various elements. His view of man seems to be a narrow one. He is not able to see the comic and bright side of life.

Q. 125. With special reference to "Death of a Salesman discuss Arthur Miller as a writer of social tragedies.

Or

Examine John Gassner's evaluation of Arthur Miller as social and moral realist.

Or

Discuss "Death of a Selesman" as a social tragedy.

Ans. The common theme of Miller's plays is the individual versus society. As a dramatist he concentrated on a single subject —"the struggle ... of the individual attempting to gain his rightful position in his society", or in his family which is a part and unit of society Like Ibsen, Shaw and Galsworthy Miller also deals with social problems of the modern men, but in a different technique.

The works of Arthur Miller belong to that shool of cocial realism, which has dominated the theatre ever since Ibsen produced his realistic plays like *A Doll's House*, *Ghosts* and *Pillars of Society*. Miller's first successful play *All My Sons* shows the influence of Ibsen. Its theme may be briefly described as the idea of guilt from the past permeating and destroying the present. The guilty protagonist is Joe Keller, an industrialist who, during the war supplied the government with a batch of faulty cylinder heads. When these drought about the death of twenty one pilots, Keller committed the second crime of putting all the blame on his innocent manager Deever. Deever goes to jail and Keller prospers This irony is supported by other instances that Miller affords in the examples of those who suffer fighting for their country and those who, staying behind flourish. But the success of Keller is not lasting. The climax of the play is the suicide of his son in the army, on hearing the news of his fathers crime. And Keller stripped of his sentimental defences, kills himself. The complications that Keller's crime bring about the betrayal and the suffering of the innocent are vividly drawn by Miller.

In *Death of a Salesman* also the same theme of self-interest appears. Willy Loman, the hero is a salesman who is driven by two examples of success that have a strong hold on his imagination. These are, first that of a brother who ran away and became rich, and secondly, of a very successful salesman to whom buyers come without his having to take the slightest trouble. Loman is propelled not by ambition for himself but for his 2 sons, for whom he wants every good thing. But contrary to his expectation the sons come eventually to despise him. In his confrontation with his elder son Biff Loman sees everything with brilliant clarity. Biff asserts his independence by rejecting all the dreams the father has ipun for him and by asserting his right to be a failure. A possibility of making his son care for him opens out before him, and the salesman goes out crying out "That boy—that boy is going to be magnificent !" The idea that has just dawned in his mind is that of committing suicide, making Biff come into the twenty thousand dollars of his life insurance. The deluded salesman contemplates Biff's reaction to this magnanimous deed of his father. Even Ben, his brother, he thinks, will worship him for it. With a sense of triumph he asserts that Biff will thus be able to go on better than his neighbour's son Bernard. "When the mail comes he'll be ahead of Bernard again "he says

The Crucible(1953) is a play that has as its background, the Puritan Massachusetts. The scenes are laid at the time of the notorious salem witch trials. The protagonist is a salem farmer, John Proctor who finds himself involved in the witch-hunt. Being one of the responsible citizens, it is his duty to fight against the evil of witchcraft. A few village girls who are seen dancing naked in the woods proclaim themselves demon-possessed, and to prove

their point, they name a few people who have had traffic with the devil. Abigail, one of the girls was once a servant in the house of John Proctor and the farmer had committed aduletery with her Abigail was subsequently sent out of the house by the farmer's wife. Now the girl who is still in love with Proctor defends his wife, but in defying the court, he finds himself accused of witchcraft and is put in prison.

In prison Proctor and two other innocent characters are to be burnt to death unless they confess their guilt. To die would be actually couiting martyrdom. but Procter feels that in view of his having once committed adultery, he is not worthy of being regarded a martyr. His dilemma is solved by his wife who forgives him and advises him to make a false confession to a corrupt court P octor is tempted to do so, but when he learns that his confession will be nailed to the church-door, he is horrified at the idea. He does not want to blacken the others and moreover he realises that death is preferable to losing his name. He chooses to die with the others.

In these three plays of Miller, we find the common theme of the individual versus society. In *All My Sons* we get the idea of a man in the powerful grip of ambition, betraying society. Society is not entirely absolved of blame either. Miller draws up an indictment of the society too for he suggests that it is the pressures of a materialist society that guided Keller in making a choice that is anti-social. He could have admitted to the government the fact that the cylinders he supplied them were faulty. But to do so would be to lose the prestige of his business. Again the inescapable rela ion between individual and society is made clear by Keller's agony when his neighbours call him "Murderer" and his elation when they respect him and accept him. Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman* is also influenced in everything by society and success in terms of social evaluation. His identification of success is with a cheering crowd round a foot-ball field. It is the central point of Miller's social philosophy that society and the individual are inextricably linked. In *All My Sons* Keller's betrayal of his parental responsibility. There is a great moral in the irony that Keller who justified his conduct on the ground that he was preserving his small business for his sons, should be exposed as a malefactor by his own son It is significant that this man who harms society, his paternal love and devotion to his family's welfare are exposed as manifestations of egotism Miller the moralist exposes the faults and follies of Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman* The hollo success wo ship, false values and inability to face the truth are depicted. Critics have praised Miller for keeping the balance between pity and justice. The same balance is maintained in his plays between social causation and individual responsibility for the tragic fate that hovers over his characters In *The Crucible* once again, we

find the playwright intertwining the ..ial and the tragic elements. John Proctor's dilemma in gaol is based on the fact his actions inevitably involve the rest of his community, and he has difficu ty in choosing a course of action Miller's later plays *A Memory of Tw · Mondays* (1955) and *A View From the Bridge* also evince the dramatist's socially directed attitude. The first of these, a one-act play is about an intelligent youngman doing manual labour with a group of people who have no prospect in life other than doing physical labour. The dreariness to which these man are condemned and from which the youngman can hope to rise is evoked effectiv.ly. The mutual loyalty and sympathetic affection of these men that make the dreariness endu able are a so depicted by the dramatist. In *A View From the Bridge* (1955) also Miller makes use of the familiar themes of loyalty, of betrayal and of the need for a name and for public recognition.

The above survey of Miller's plays makes clear the moral war that Miller has been waging through his plays and the social philosophy that th y demonstrate. As for his realism, it is evident in the characters whom he depicted and the environment that he pictured. "In a play such as *All My Sons*, there are elements beyond both plot and idea that engage our interest. Characters are brought to life, an atmesph.re or mood is evoked, an environment is presented ; and insight into how people feel and think or rationalize is present. The texture and actual aliveness of *A l My Sons* consists of the reality of family life observed by Miller ; of the reality of Miller's Joe Keller depicted as a shrewd "little man" with a feeling for family and a sense of cleverly concealed desperation; of Keller's wife, presented as the affectionate "little woman" for whom issues of right and wrong or guilt and retribution and secondary to keeping life going with creature comforts and amiable personal relationships ; of the ambivalences of Keller's surviving son, whose filial loyalty is being severely tested when he must inform against his father. In addition Miller made reality out of the neighbourliness of suburban neighbours, and out of various other details, down to a blasted little tree in a cramped backy and which is symbolic of the Keller family's narrow way of life ; normal intellectual moral range and questionable moral situation. Miller in short, created his play rather than merely contrived it He presented life as will as argument on the stage."*

In *D ath of a Salesman* too Miller has combined the realistic technique with the expressionistic intermixing the present and past events and weaving a complex pattern of immediate tensions and recollected crises. Though his scenes are imaginatively background are real. They are definitely and recognizably middle class. Though Willy Loman's "memories and hallucinations

* John Gassner. "Theatre in Our Times."

moved erratically over time and space," they were tied tightly together by his immediate tensions and conflicts.

Q. 126. Discuss the theme of "Death of a Salesman".

Or

What are the various thematic interpretations of the theme of Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman".

Ans *Death of a Salesman*, which had 742 peformances in Broadway Theatre in New York. has been one of the most popular plays. It received the Drama Critics' and the Pulitzer pri es; it has also been filmed and televised The action of the play is not dev loped chronologically. The playwright has followed the flash-back technique

The play is a story of Willy Loman, an American salesman who has worked for the Wagner firm for thirty-four years, and when he is old, he is fired and rendered jobless His two sons Bill Loman and Happy Loman are lost ones. They are blacksheep. They consider their father lost. Willy Loman has cherished false ideals, about life. He gives undue importance to money. He is lost in the world of *Maya* (wealth). He suffers from a sense of inadequacy and insecurity, inferiority and loneliness. He is a dreamer. In order to make his family well off he commits suidide so that his sons may get money from the Life Insurance Company which has insured his life. He kills himself by dashing his car against a tree.

An overriding theme of the play, says Gerald Weales, is that it is a play about the last terrible day of a man and about the flood of facts and lies, of reality and fantasy, of the actual and the potential that made him and killed him. Dillingham says that the theme of *Death of a Salesman* is "loss of conscience." According to Eleanor Clark the play is an attack on American capitialism. Some other critics regard the play a propaganda play which reveals some evils of the contemporary American society Among such critics the names of Harold Clurman and John Gassner are notable. Raymond Williams sees the play as a treatment of alienatien, in the classical Marxist rather than the existential sense, and sees in Miller the beginnings of a new social drama. On the other hand, Fuller sees the play as one man's failure and not as an inductment of the system. There are some others who have interpreted it in Freudian term and attributed to it another abtruse psychological theories (for example Schneider) From a Catholic point of view the play has been regarded as a warning of the meaninglessness of life where there is no religious faith.

As a matter of fact *Death of a Salesman* is not a piece of precis or report. It is a work of art. And a work of art does not do just one thing, does not appeal to all in just one way, does not

have only one conclusive interpretation always. Hence such diversity of opinions about the theme of the play. Broadly speaking, the play has currents of all these themes. Nevertheless, a better interpretation of the theme has been offered by the playwright Miller himself. These themes might have remained unconscious in his mind. He wanted to convey something else. And what was that is given in the following paragraph.

"Salesman," according to Miller, "is a tragedy of a man who did believe that he alone was not meeting the qualifications laid own for mankind by those cleanshaven frontiersmen who inhabit the peaks of broadcasting and advertising offices. From those forests of canned goods high up near the sky, he heard the thundering command to succeed as it ricocheted down the newspaper-lined canyons of his city, heard not a human voice, but a wind of a voice to which no human can reply in kind, except to stare into the mirror at a failure."

So *Death of a Salesman* is not merely a drama of domestic quarrels between a father and his sons, a drama of conflict between capitalism and communism, between self and soul, between psyche and conscience, between religiousity and irreligiousity, between a salesman and a manufacturer, but of a conflict between the individual and society, a conflict between man's values and his environment The playwright was trying in "Salesman" to set forth what happens when a man does not have a grip on the forces of life and has no sense of values which will lead him to that kind of a grip. "*Death of a Salesman* is the most poignant statement of man as he must face himself." Its basic theme is man's loss of conscience Loyalty to family also is its theme. It is an anatomy of failure.

Below is given the summary of critical opinions on the theme of "Salesman" :—

1. *Zygmunt Adamczewski* (1963) : *The Play* **Death of a Salesman,** *deals with Willy Loman's loss of identity.*
2. *Eric Bentley* (1949) : *The play presents the "little man as victim," the social drama blurring the tragedy.*
3. *Eleanor Clark* (1949) : *The play is a crude Marxist attack on the brutal capitalist "system" in America.*
4. *Winfred Dusenburg* (1960) : **Death of a Salesman** *illustrates a theme of loneliness since each member of Willy's family feels isolated.*
5. *Howard A Fuller* (1949) : *The play properly shows the failures and strength of "the hero of American Society"—the salesman.*
6. *Esther Jackson* (1963) : **Death of a Salesman** *represents "perhaps most nearly mature myth about human suffering in an industrial age."*

7. *E. Charlotte F. Otten* (1963) : *The play explores the problem of self-knowledge.*
8. *Daniel E. Schneider* (1949) : *The play is an analysis of the "Oedipal" father-son relationship.*

Some have regarded it as Communist propaganda denouncing the evils of Capitalism, while others have seen it as a sympathetic study of the problems of big business. Some have interpreted it in Freudian terms and attributed to its author abstruse psychological theories, while from a Catholic point of view the play has been regarded as a warning of the meaninglessness of life where there is no religious faith.

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Q. 127. Discuss Willy Loman as a tragic hero

Ans. Who is the hero of ' Salesman" ? Different answers are available to this question. There are critics who say that Willy Loman is a little man, an everyman. He does not have the status and grandeur of a tragic hero. Hence he cannot be regarded as a hero. A woman critic regards Linda as the heroine ; she thinks that the real tragedy in the play is the tragedy of Linda. There are others who say that Biff is the hero of the play. But Arthur Miller certainly created Willy Loman to be the hero of the play. Both intrinsic and extrinsic evidence is available to support and uphold this view.

This confusion arises when one tries to look at "Salesman" through the canons established by Aristotle. Aristotle said that the action in a tragedy must be serious, magnificent and noble. And the tragic hero must be a figure of stature to arouse sympathy. But Miller's concept of tragedy is different from Aristotle's. Miller says:

1. **I believe that the common man is as apt a subject for tragedy in its highest sense as kings were.**
2. **......I think the tragic feeling is evoked in us when we are in the presence of a character who is ready to lay down his life, if need be, to secure one thing—his sense of personal dignity...***
3. **......If the exaltation of a tragic action were truly a property of the highbred character alone, it is inconceivable that the mass of mankind should cherish tragedy above all other forms, let alone be capable of undrstanding it.***
4. **Insistence upon the rank of the tragic hero, or the so called nobility of his character, is really but a clinging to the outward forms of tragedy...........***

* Arthur Miller, 'Tragedy and the Common Man', *The New York Times* (Feb. 27, 1949, II. pp. 1-3).

5. It is time, I think, that we who are without kings, took up this bright thread of our history and followed it to the only place it can possibly lead in our time—the heart and spirit of the average man.

Having gone through these views of Arthur Miller many of our doubts about Willy's claim to the heroship of the play are put to rest.

"Death of a Salesman" is the tragedy of modern man. And modern man does not have the legendary status. It is a tragedy of realism ; hence its protagonist has got to be different from that of the Greek and Elizabethan tragedies. If Willy's stature is different, it is because of the structure of the play. "Salesman" is the tragedy of Willy ; it concerns with his life ; it reveals to us his mind, his conflicts and difficulties, his ideals (false or true) and his predicament, his agony and suffering, his confusion and illusion, his expectations and disappointments. It also shows his relations with his family, with his wife and sons, with his society, especially his employers.

Willy Loman is intrinsically American, but in his particularity he also attains universality Shot through with weaknesses and faults, he is almost a personification of self-delusion and waste, the apotheosis of the modern man in an age too vast, demanding and complex for him. But without abrogating his intense individuality, he is also the archetypal father, not far removed in his hopes, mistakes catastrophe, and reconciliation from that most ludicrous and sublime of all archetypal parents, King Lear. Finally, he personifies the human being's desne, for all his flaws, to force apart the steel pincers of necessity and partake of magnificence, and in this need he becomes a profoundly relevant man for all ages.

Whilly Loman is a daemonic figure in a shabby business suit, a man unable to compromise his dream, who—like the tragi-comic Spanish Don who hurled himself foolishly and wonderfully against the world's windmills must pursue his conception of himself wherever it will lead him with an intensity that most definitely passes understanding. He is finally destroyed because he seeks a kind of ecstasy in life which by its very nature is impossible to maintain. Nevertheless, his inherent humanity and his capacity for love and self-sacrifice sympathetically and poignantly qualify this destruction.

If Willy Loman is, as Eric Bentley, labeled him, 'the little man as victim', he is more the victim of his choices than of his environment. He does not suffer well-lessly, but for his conception of dignity and respect, misguided as the concept may be. He is a totally committed man, clinging to his personal dream with a frenzied intensity that lifts him far beyond the ordinary. He refuses to surrenber either his vision of himself or his expectations for his

son, and it is this fan·ticism which endows him with a stature clearly at odds with the littleness that is too glibly, associated with his name and profession.

Furthermore, "Willy is not a materialist but a mystic for whom money is not an end in itself but a means to grandeur". (Benjamin Nelson). 'Greatness', and 'magnificence' are two words that abound in his vocabulary and define him more accurately than his sales and front stoop put together. Willy Loman dies for his son, but he also dies for his concept of magnificence and the exalted hope that it will be realized in Biff.

From the above it follows that Willy Loman certainly possesses the merits of becoming a hero of modern tragedy. Bierman, Hart and Johnson are of the opinion that the whole question of Willy's hidden identity is curiously like that in *Oedipus*. The key words—he does not know who he is—point the parallel almost unmistakably.........The question we are really asking is whether Willy Loman recognizes anything equal in quality to that which drove Oedipus to his self-mutilation and Othello to his suicide. The answer is both yes and no."* These critics have compared Willy Loman with Oedipus and Othello.

Furthermore, Willy Loman is a tragic hero fit according to Hegel's description of the tragic hero, the character who seeks a "good" too far or in the wrong directions so that he loses his identity, his necessary values, and is carried to destruction.** Willy Loman is in search of success, in itself a good. His tragedy is partly the fault of his environment, especially Ben and Linda, who give him a false conception of success, and partly his own fault since he is so fanatically devoted to this goal. (Dillingham)

Lastly, there is an element of the sublime in Willy's naivete. When he falls we note the toppling of a giant. In his relations with them, he is a King Lear in mufti or at any rate closer to Turgener's "King Lear of the Steppes" than he is to Balzac's masochistic Goriot. The truth is that Willy Loman is cast in the heroic mould because he can feel greatly, even if his thinking is bounded in a nutshell.

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Q. 128 Draw a character-sketch of Willy Loman.

Ans Willy is one of the immortal characters of Miller. He is an American salesman who is surrounded by the illusion of 'Maya' which he regards as a key to success and happiness in his

* Judah Bierman, James Hart, and Stanley Johnson *The Dramatic Experience* (Prentice Hall, 1958), pp. 490—493.

** This is the view expressed by William B. Dillingham in *Emory University Quarterly*, XVI (1960). pp. 40—50.

life. His values are essentially the values of American everyman of today. He believes in the myth of success and "carishma" of personality. In fact, he is a man who has been left far behind in the race of life. He is old, tired and exhausted, and has not much with him against a rainy day. Thus he suffers from the sense of economic and social insecurity. With all his mereurial nature, his temper, his massive dreams and little cruelties, Willy Loman is a failure in life. He has failed not only as a salesman inviting the displeasure of his boss to dismiss him when he needs help but has failed also as a father.

Willy is a dreamer. In his younger days of salesmanship he dreamed : "Someday I'll have my own business, and I'll never have to leave home any more." At that time his son Happy had expressed his hope that he would have as big a business as Uncle Charley's, but Willy had confidently said : "Bigger than Uncle Charley ! Because Charley is not liked. He's liked, but he's not well liked." Illusions are real to him. He never comes out of the world of dreams, illusions, and false beliefs. He boasts to his sons and wife. He tells them that people all round the places he visists know him. But when he dies there comes hardly any mourner to shed tears.

One reason of his failure is his misplaced faith in the power of personal attractiveness. Second reason is his extra-ordinary concern for the well-being of his sons. He does not allow his children freedom to find out their own values. On the contrary, he wants to bring them up in his own image of illusions and false beliefs. He never lets them face reality. Thirdly, he is a victim of his society which encourages and develops in its members false values. It is the world of competition that has caused his doom.

Willy is not without contradictions. On the one hand he says about his Chevy: "Chevrolet, Linda, is the greatest car ever built," and just for a few moment later, when he is reminded about the money he owes on its repair, he bursts out: "That goddam Chevrolet, they ought to prohibit the manufacture of that car". Similarly on the one hand he says to his sons: "I never have to wait in line to see a buyer,' on the other, he confesses to his wife : "You know the troule is, Linda, people don't seem to take to me." Again he holds contradictory views about his son, Biff. On the one hand he speaks proucly of the great football hero that Biff has been in the college ; on the other, he regards him as a good-for-nothing fellow.

Willy also suffers from a sense of inadequacy and inferiority. He tries to talk a out something he does not know anything about. In the play, several imes he hints at his sense of insecurity, of haunting loneliness, of ravaging emptiness, of the lack of communication of his inarticulate grouping into the meaning of a purpose-

ful life. He feels that the structure of his life is built on a temporary edifice.

Much ink has been split on the characterization of Willy Loman. It appears that Willy would become in future as immortal a tragic character as Orestes, Hamlet, Medea or Macbeth. He is not merely an individual, but a philosophy, a belief, an item of faith, intuition, psychology, or an identification of the common man. As a hero he represents the common man.

Willy Loman is a low man. He is a salesman who sells not goods but his "self". He gives his life, or sells it in order to justify the waste of it. He is so many things at a time—a father, a husband a salesmon, a member of a society, an item of human psyche, a tragic hero. To use Miller's words, "Willy is a baby... Willy is a victim..."* He represents the whole mass of American civilization. 'a slogan out of the 1930s', 'a banner to librate people,' 'a criticism of society.' He is an indictment against the machine civilization of America which has deprived man of his real content and peace of mind. He is, indeed, an average American. As Miller himself has said, "I didn't write 'Death of a Salesman' to announce some new American man, or an old American man. Willy Loman is, I think, a person who embodies in himself some of the most terrible conflicts running through the streets of America today,"**and that Loman is Everyman.

"He has lived on his smile and on his hopes ; survived from sale to sale ; been sustained by the illusion that he has countless friends in his territory, that everything will be allright, that he is a success, and that his boys will be successes also. His misfortune is that he has gone through life as an eternal adolescent as someone who has not dared to take stock, as someone who never knew who he was. His personality has been his profession ; his energy, his protection. His major ambition has been not only to be liked, but well liked. His ideal for himself and for his sons has stopped with an easy, back-slapping, sports-loving, locker-room popularity. More than ruining his sons so that one has become a woman chaser and the other a theif, his standards have turned both boys agains their father."***

When the play begins, Willy Loman has reached the ebb-tide years. He is too old and worn out to continue travelling. His back aches when he stoops to lift the heavy sample cases that were once his pride. His tixed, wandering mind makes it unsafe for him to drive the car which has carried him from one town and sale to the next His sons see through him and despise him. His wife

* "Morality and Modern Drama : Interview with Philip Gelb", first published in *Educational Theatre Journal*. X (October 958)

** *Ibid.*

*** John Mason Brown. *Saturday Review of Literature*, XXXII (Feb. 26, 1949), 30-32.

sees through him and defends him, knowing him to be better than most and at any rate, well intentioned. What is far worse, when he is fired from his job he begins to see through himself. He realizes he is, and has been, a faiure. Hence his deliberate smashup in his car in order to bring in some money for his family and make the final payment on his home when there is almost no one left who wants to live in it.

Age, however, is his enemy. It has brought fatigue to his mind and body. Yet he cherishes boyish dreams and hopes and buoyancy. He is condemned by age. He can no more escape from it than he can from himself. The confusions, the weakness, the goodness, the studpidity, and the self sustaining illusion which are Willy are the elements or constituents which go on to make an average American, or to use a broader term, an average man. He is a bread-winner almost to the end, and a bread-winner even in his death. He has perhaps dreamt the wrong dream. His friend is right when defends him from his son's charge, and says, "You do not understand. Willy was a salesman. And for a salesman, there is no rock bottom to the life. He don't put a bolt to a nut, he don't tell you law or give you medicine. He's a man way out there in the blue, riden' on a smile and a shoeshine. And when they start not smilin' back—that' an earth-quake And then you get yourself a couple spots on your hat, and you're finished. Nobody dost blame this man. A salesman is got to dream, boy. It comes with the territory."*

Willy's rock-bottom faith has been in the capacity to get along with people to make a good impression : it is with this faith that he slides at old age and ruin while his brother Ben, who appears in some well-staged flashbacks, piles up a fortune in Alaska, and because of it at the end he is still pushing his favcurite son Biff toward a failure worse than his own. The irony lies not so much in his failure but in the denial of the man's true nature and talents along the way Merely society, or fate alone is not responsible for his tragedy. He has a fatal flaw too. He lives in a dream world ; he can't face reality ; he has always had excuses for his own failures. American capitalistic society is also responsible for his ruin. He has wroked for thirty-four years for a firm, and when he needs a job most, the proprietor of the firm finds him useless, and shunts him away.

He takes Biff's tears not only as an evidence of love, which they are, but as a kind of testimonial, an assurance that Willy's way has been the right one all along. Once again secure in his dream ("that boy is going to be magnificent"), he goes to his suicide and death, convinced that with the insurance money, Biff will be to use Willy's favourtie nouns—a hero, a prince.

* - See John Mason Brown, *op cit.*

So Willy Loman is the protagonist of *Death of a Salesman*. He is a salesman who first sells commodities and then sells himself as a commodity. To quote Gerald Weales. Willy is "a corpse who happily refuses to stay dead." According to Ivor Brown, Willy is a "poor, flashy, self-deceiving man." John Gassner calls him the "loud-mouthed dolt and emotional baby-in-the-words." In Schneider's opinion Willy is a "low-man". Eleanor Clark regards him as a "common man", Fuller as "everyman", Weigand as a 'victim of society', and Raymond Williams as a social-martyr." Hynes opines that Willy is a 'schizophrenic (a person suffering from some mental disorder marked by lack of association between the intelleactual processes and actions).

Q. 129. Write a note on Miller's Technique with special reference to "Death of a Salesman."

Ans. Miller uses a verbal and symbolic technique and a narrative technique in his plays. *Death of a Salesman* is no exception to this technique. His characters delineate personal qualities through their particular usage of commonplace word and idioms : their language style reflects their style and conduct. Some examples are cited blow :

(1) *Linda* : I don't say he's a great man. Willy Loman never made a lot of money. His name was never in the paper. He's not the finest character that ever lived. But he's a human being, and a terrible thing is happening to him......

(2) *Linda*: He's only a little boat looking for a harbor.

(3) *Charley*: Willy was a salesman. And for a salesman, there is no rock to bottom to the life......He's a man way out there in the blue, riding on a smile and a shoeshine.

The above speeches are a hint that society is symbolic of a vast ocean, and the individual is like a boat looking for a harbour.

(4) *Willy*: ......the woods are burning !

(5) *Willy*: Biff, remember that ....Like a young God, Hercules—something like that. And the sun, the sun all around him.

This speech hints at the imminent doom and difficulty.

Even the vaguest generalizations become an instrument for self-exposition for Miller's characters.

Another important word is "man"which Willy uses several times. Consequently this word becomes symbolic and interpretative, a philosophical problem to ponder what exactly a man is in this world :

(1) A man who can't handle tools is not a man.

(2) The man who makes an appearance is the man who gets ahead.

(3) ......if a man is building something he must be on the right track.

(4) ......a man has got to add up to something.

(5) Mr. Wagner is "a masterful man".

(6) His father was "an adventurous man," "a very great and a very wild-hearted man."

(7) His brother Ben was "a man worth talking to," "the only man I ever met who knew the answers."

(8) Charley is "a man of few words."

Another significant word is "boy." Willy always calls Biff "a boy," "a kidder". Linda calls Willy "a drummer boy."

More prominent than Ben and Singleman is Willy's memory. In telling his story Miller returned to a narrative technique he had found useful before. Audiences learn the truth about the father's son from the son's revealing statements. Biff's and Linda's speeches in the opening scene are suggestive. The chief narrative method for developing tension, temperament, and fact is dramatized memory, which allows the dramatist to represent time as "a mobile concurrency of past and present" rather than as a sequence of discrete, independent segments. The subjective approach to delayed exposition brings to light not only crucial past events but also the emotional charges associated with them. Willy Loman revolves round and between the current and past guilt-feelings. The memories, generally concerned with the disintegration of his family and his professional aspirations, are released by analogous happenings in the present. Thus after he is fired by Howard Willy remembers his refusal of a vocational opportunity that might havey led to magnificent accomplishment instead of the present ignominy. And Biff's unfavourable report on an attempt to acquire financial backing for a business turns Willy's mind back to the hotel room in which Biff discovered him with his mistress—a discovery that the father fears has initiated his son's failures.

Changes in place and time are cleverly implemented by ingenious stage effects, a skeletonized house-set, multiple playing areas (apron, forestage, and two levels of the house), and the repetition of key words or topics before, during, and after each recollection. Miller's skill in executing imaginative, meaningful transitions is apparent in the opening scene, which introduces the subject of family disharmony. A conversation with Linda about his driving that day reminds Willy of the old "Chevvy" he owned when his boys still loved and obeyed him. As he "loses himself in reminiscences," sitting in his kitchen, interest moves to another playing level, the upstairs bedroom, where the brothers too have been

discussing their father's careless driving. Then, when they recall their popularity with girls in their youth, they in turn are interrupted by Willy "mumbling" down stairs to an imaginary Biff on the same subject ("the girls pay for you ?...... Boy, you must really be makin' a hit"). Musical motifs, lighting arrangements, and scenic changes complete the preparation for the first vision, which opens, appropriately, with Willy admiring his popular teen-age sons as Biff polishes the "Chevvy."

Similarly other scenes too are designed cleverly. When Willy and Charley are playing, Ben's image is allowed to overpower Willy. Willy's family dreams are allowed to go on lingering in his mind beacuse they help him in recollecting the past and forgetting the unhappy present and building a hope for a happy future.

Within the acts and scenes the dramatist interjects moments of relative calm and sweet flute music. Such effects make the play quite effective.

The second act begins on an optimistic note. Biff has gone to request financial support for an undertaking a sporting goods business—that he hopes will satisfy all the Loman criteria for masculine integrity. But tension increases sharply as Willy reaches the nadir of his profession—he is fired because no one likes him any longer. Finally, Willy's self-defence reaches its crisis. Insecurity originally aroused by rememberance of The Woman, becomes unbearable with her re-entrance in the restaurant scene. This scene a virtuoso orchestration of changing moods, times, themes, and stage effects culminates the progression to truth ; Willy unintentinonally exhibits conclusive proof that his dishonesty, instability, and self-righteousness caused the father-son antagonism in the past and has perpetuated in the present.

At first, Hap's amusing, worldly-wise manner with the comic waiter and with the "lavishly dressed" woman provides respite from the relentlessly accumulating pressure. But Biff reinstitutes the perssure with his narration of what happened between him and his former employer. Willy is already unhappy and frustrated because of his interview with his employer. It is at this moment that the son wants the father to know the truth. The playwright chose the right moment to heighten the tragic effect.

To further contort the grotesque interplay between optimism and dread, Biff's report triggers in Willy a recollection of the terrible hour in which his son saw him with The Woman in a Boston hotel room.

What a wonderful scene it is ! Hap tries to humour his father, brother, and girl friends Biff revolves between rage and pity ; Willy, recalling his motification before his young son sixteen years before, and confusing present with past arguments, moves from

wrath to anguish. Violent gestures, jarring trumpet notes, fading lights, and disembodied laughs jumble this well-ordered conversational chaos. Even the young ladies Hap has acquired add to the emotional diversity. From the depths of compassion Biff haltingly confesses, "Miss Forsythe, you've just seen a prince walk by. A fine troubled prince. A hard-working, unappreciated prince. A pal, you understand. A good companion. Always for his boys." And Miss Forsythe insipidly replies, "that's so sweet !"

After Willy's impotent reassertion of authority in the restaurant's washroom, excitement modulates in descending stages to the closing quiet. By debating suicide with "Ben" whose advice Willy now invents rather than recalls, the protagonist prepares himself (and the spectator) for release from anxiety. The urgency of his last argument with Biff is sharp but transient ; when both verbalize their resentment—the restaurant tutmoil hardly permitted anything so rational—at least token reconciliation is possible.

Heartened by his son's love, encouraged by his brother's imagined approval, driven by his consuming need to "make it, Biff and I," and accompanied by music that "crashes down in a frenzy of sound," Willy Loman insanely rushes off to gloss his tarnished image. "This frenzy" abruptly graduates to "the soft pulsation of a single cello stiring," and the play concludes with a sense of exhaustion suitable to the Salesman's end.

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Q. 130. Discuss Miller's views on the role of family in modern drama, with particular reference to *Death of a Salesman*.

Or

Discuss loyalty to family as theme dramatized by Arthur Miller devoting all or most of your discussion to any one of his plays.

Or

Miller always sees the family as "related to the larger group the society, in inescapable ond life-giving ways " Discuss with reference to *Death of a Salesman*.

Or

"In the Miller family the force is not centripetal but centrifugal." Discuss this statement.

Or

Discuss "Death of a Salesman" as a family drama.

Or

How far "Death of a Salesman" is a play of a father-son conflict ?

Ans. In his essay, "The Family in Modern Drama," Miller

has discussed the role of family in modern drama. He regards family as a *polis*. Family to him is not merely a means to delineate the affectional ties between the members of a family and their relations, etc. "Sentimentalism," says Miller, "is perfectly all right, but it is nowhere near a great challenge, and to pursue it is not going to bring us closer to the fated mission of the drama." The problem which concerns Miller is : "How may man make for himself a home in that vastness of strangers and how may he transform that vastness into a home ?" In other words, Miller in his plays tries to find out an answer to the problem : "How can man develop for himself a transitional *polis* that may bridge the gap between the private home of the family and the public home of that new unity towards which he believes the world to be moving?"

Like Eliot, Miller also sees home as a place where one starts from. It is not the duty of the playwright to draw up blueprints for a new society, but to give the news of the present : it is the drama's "capacity to open up the present". When Miller was writing *A View from the Bridge*, he observed : "It is true to say, I think, that the language of the family is the language of the private life—prose. The language of society, the language of the public life, is verse."

Miller, therefore, regards family not as a microcosm but as something "laying siege to the fortress of unrelatedness." He tries lo relate the family to the larger group, the society. in inescapable and life-giving ways. According to Daniel Schneider, the basic and hidden motivation of 'Death of a Salesman' is the following :

> The guilt of a younger brother for his hatred of his older brother, for Willy Loman is also a younger brother...... This is the dream of a younger, unpreferred son. No other analysis, it seems to me, can account for the increasing frequency of the vision of Ben, Willy's older and envied brother. In a sense, every first son "strikes it rich" in a younger son's eyes.

This statement is true in parts only It fails to apply to Happy Loman, it does not apply to Chris Keller either. Both these characters are very much aware of the advantages they have over their elder brothers. Nor is Willy's dream of Ben so simple....It is the role of a father by Willy that we are interested in. No other member of his family such as father or mother is given any place in the play, because Miller sees the family as a group. The son's disillusion in the father in the three lier plays brings disaster because of the excessive veneration they have given him (Willy Loman). As mentioned by Schneider, Willy Loman "is not in the eyes of his sons just a man, but a god in decay", and because of the circumstances in which that disillusion comes about.

Whereas O'Neills plays touch upon the problems of respect, lack of proper affection, obedience, etc. within a family, Arthur

Miller's plays view the disintegration of a family. In the Loman household, resentment, jealousy, and transferred guilt play havoc. Linda reproaches her sons for want of due respect and proper consideration for t. eir father. In his plays, however, the family as a force is not centripetal but centrifugal That is why the dissolution of the famil) is not painful. Miller does so to assert the American individualism. The individual who can survive the inevitable disintegration of the family and who can find for himself another role in the larger social group can become "at home in the world." It is on this thesis that Miller builds his plays.

In Henry Popkin's opinion, Miller's impllcit indictment of sex as a wicked influence is remarkably consistent and emphatic. But this is not true of the plays *The Man Who Had All the Luck* and *All My Sons.* What is criticised in Miller's plays is sex in its anti-family and anti-social manifestations. Willy's sordid liaison with the woman in Boston, Happy's seduction of the executives' finances, Jonn Proctor's adultery with Abigail, Eddie Carbone s incestuous promptings towards Catherine—are some of the destructive manifestations of sex as a bad passion posing danger to the integrity of the man and the solidarity of the family. Many a time Miller shows confidence in marriage as a satisfactory partnership. Nevertheless, sex is not so constant and deep obsession with Miller as it is with Tennessee Williams

Death of a Salesman can be called a family drama also because it is a tragedy not merely the tragedy of one person, the father, but equall) the tragedy of Linda, the mother, and Biff, he son.

Death of a Salesman is a family drama somewhat like Shakespeare's *King Lear* whose theme is the "unnaturalness between the child and the parent" "the bond crack'd 'twixt son and father." In "Salesman" also a son (Biff) looks to his father (Willy Loman) for moral direction, but instead finds corruption (Willy's adultery). and severs the bond of mutual respect ("you fake ! You phony little fake !").

After the breach of trust shame and resentment prevent permanent reunion ; "he thinks I've been spiting him all these years and it's eating him up," Biff remarks. The father, as outraged as the son, rigidly reasserts his ethical authority "he'll see what I am, I was right !" thereby complicating the son's effort to arrive a new basis for conduct (Biff : "will you let me go, for Christ's sake ?").

Both father and son undergo a crisis of self-knowledge : but Willy Loman, unlike Joe Keller, refuses to admit failure in his obsessive drive to attain personal fulfilment by moulding a loyal worthy son : "I won't take the rap for this, you hear ?" Keller finally concedes his position to be untenable. The Salesman, on the other hand, commits suicide not simply as an escape from

shame but as a last attempt to reastablish his own self-confidence and his family's integrity. "I always knew one way or another we were gonna make it, Biff and I !" he cries in his last speech. "That boy—that boy is going to be magnificent !" Thus the two principal characters in *Death of a Salesman* each deriving but thwarting the other's well-being, compromise the poles of an irreconcilable opposition.

As a result of his discoveries about his father Biff suffers an emotional and moral shock experienced by numerous other literary figures, including the Biblical Adam and many of Shakespeare's tragic heroes. He begins in security and innocence; proceeds through enlightenment, indignation, disillusion, and despair ; and ends in cynical sorrowful resignation. His sense of frustration and disrespect for his father increases when he sees his father with a woman.

Other family relationships touched upon in the play are those of a husband and a wife. A wife not merely need love her husband, she must understand him as well. Linda Loman, despite several virtues, patience, courage and a sense of responsibility, unconsciously becomes instrumentally in Willy's tragedy.

The play further reflects another son's approach to his father and his family. Happy is another blacksheep. And the father dies just to see his sons well-settled. Happy, also a bachelor in his thirties, has become "Big Shot" a seventy-five-dollar-a-week merchandizing man, who ignores his aging father's plight and spends his money on women and liquor.

Many critics are ready to regard *Death of a Salesman* as a family drama Howard Fuller says that the central problem in the play is the same Oedipal problem. Some say that the tragedy is mainly that of Biff, and say it is a play about a son's troubles with his father. Biff is a character with whom an audience identifies. It is towards the self-discovery of Biff that the play leads us. William Beyer says that the play is mother's tragedy.

Nevertheless, we should not forget that *Death of a Salesman* is "a play about the last terrible day of a man and about the flood of facts and lies, of reality and fantasy, of the actual and the potential that made him and killed him. Miller did not intend the play to be a family drama. It is by sheer accident it is such. The main purpose of the playwright was to show what happens to a man when he loses the grip of the forces of life, when he cherishes wrong values wrongly nourished by society, when he fails to understand himself and his environment.

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Q. 131. Discuss Miller's "Death of a Salesman" as a realistic play.

Or

A blend of realism and expressionism in "Death of a Salesman" is not the weakness some critics have claimed, but, on the contrary, one of the play's most subtle successes. Critically examine this statement.

Or

Discuss the symbolism of 'Death of a Salesman". And show how far the play is a union of realism and symbolism.

Ans. Miller is a realist His plays deal with real (or life-like) characters and events. His characters use an idiom of the common man. Their problems relate to every common man of this world. Their joys are our own; their miseries like those of ours. Miller's realism is based on the observations of life. He studies not merely the environment but the inside of his characters too.

Miller's realism originates from (1) conventionalism and traditionalism (2) observation of reality (3) observation of the people's inside, especially the mind. In other words his realism is based on his minute of observation of the social and psychological forces that affect man. His plays are not an escape from romanticism either. Miller believes that romanticism is a part and parcel of a majority of people. So he favours a synthesis of determinism and a paradox of will. His plays are concerned with the identity of self. Some of them touch upon the generativity also.

Death of a Salesman presents a realistic evaluation of American values. Its realism is fairly obvious, and reflects the influence on Miller of Ibsen, the great realist reformer. Other realists may satisfy themselves by just observing and depicting the reality, but Miller goes beyond that. If there is an evil, he hits at it with a reformer's zeal.

In *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman* Miller adopts Ibsen's "retrospective" structure in which an explosive situation is both explained and brought to a crisis by the gradual relation of something which has happend in the past. In *Death of a Salesman* this is, of course, Willy Loman's adultery, which by alineating his son, Biff, has destroyed the strongest value in Willy's life. This structure is filled out with a detailed evocation of modern, urban, lower-middle-class life : Miller documents a world of arch-supporters, aspirin, spectaeles, subways, time payments, advertising, Cheverolets, faulty refrigerators, life insurance, mortgages, and the adulation of high school football heroes. The language, too, except in a few places is an accurate record of the groping, half-inarticulate, cliche-ridden inadequacy of ordinary American speech. And the deadly realism of the picture is confirmed for us by the

way that American audiences have immediately recognized and identified with it in the theatre.

But Miller does not remain content with surface realism only. He tries to project it unto symbolism in *Death of a Salesman* as well as in others plays. Consider, for instance, the value that Willy and his sons attach to manual wo k, and its glamorous extension, sport, their belief that it is necessary for a man keep fit, to be able to handle tools and build things. Willy's handiness around the house is constantly impressed on us : "He was always good with his hands." Linda remembers, and Biff says that his father put more enthusiasm into building the stoop than into all his salesmanship; in his reveries Willy again teaches his boys how to simonize a car the most efficient way, aud is contemptuous of his neighbour Charlie's son Bernard, because they lack the manual skills. Willy's favourite son, Biff, is even more dextrous than his father—in high school he was a star athlete and, as a man, he can find happinesr only as a ranch hand ; one remembers that Willy's father was a pioneer type who drove over the country in a wagon, earning money by ingenious inventions and the making of flutes. Willy's mystique of the physical skill is thus a reflection of the simpler, pioneer life he craves, a symptom and a symbol of his revolt against the constraints of the modern city.

Slightly more abstracts, yet still realistic is the play's use of trees to symbolize the rural way of life which modern commercialism is choking. Willy, we are told, bought his house originally because it stood in a wooded suburb where he would hunt a little, and where his yard was flanked by two great elms; but now the trees have been cut down and his property is so over. Shadowed by apartment houses that he cannot even grow seed in his back garden (The chocked seed is a fairly obvious symbol; Willy Loman is trapped in a society which prevents him from establishing his own.) We learn at the begginning that it is dreaming about the countryside and watching scenery, particularly trees, which is the main cause of Willy's recent road accidents ; it is so look after timber that Willy's brother Ben, tries to persuade him to go to Alaska ; the "jungle". Ben says, is the place for riches; and at moments of crisis Willy tells "The woods are burning," a phrase which is nonsensical unless seen in context of the other tree references.

The last example is already diverging from realism; that is, it is not a phrase habitually used in American life ; it needs the context of the play to give it meaning. And when we find Miller directing that whenever Willy remembers the past, the stage be drenched in a green, checkered pattern of leaves, then it is obvious that the technique has moved from realistic symbolism to outright expressionism

These are symbolic and expressionistic leanings in the setting too. The apartment silhouettes are bathed in angry orange; when

Willy remembers the past the house is dapped by the green of vanished trees; when Biff and Hap pick up two women and neglect their father, the directions request a lurid red ; and at the end, when Willy insanely tries to plant seed by night, the "blues" of the stage direction simultaneously suggest moonlight and his mood of despair.

Music is similarly manipulated : the rural way of life is represented by flute music, telling "of grass and trees and the horizon" ; it is heard only by Willv whenever he dreams of the life he should have led or of the early days wnen his suburb was still in the country. It is associated with Willy's pioneer father, the flute maker ; and in the world has degenerated to Willy and Biff's unbusinesslike to habit of whistling in elevators, and, at a yet further remove, to the machanized whistling of Howard and his children as played back on a tape recorder.

The tape-recorder scene is, in fact. a brilliantly compact piece of symbolism, functioning like the "mirror scene" in some of Shakespeare's plays to epitomize the action of the whole play. Not only does it illustrate the mechanization of family like, but Howard's idolizing of his children and bullying of his wife exactly parallel Willy's showing a resemblance between the two men which undercuts left wing cliches about employer and worker ; and when Willy knocks it over and cannot stop it, the machine serves as both cause and illustration of Willy's mental breakdown: he has one of his schizophrenic attacks, and the mechanical voices, so like those of his own home life, are an equivalent to the clamorous subconscious of which he has also lost control

The crucial hotel bedroom scene in which Biff discovers his father's adultery, is heralded by a shrill trumpet blast, and Willy's final disaster is conveyed by musical shorthand : his decision to commit suicide is accompanied by a prolonged, maddening note, which collapses into a crash of discords, to represent the car crash offstage, and then modulates into a dead march to introduce the requiem scene. Certain characters and situations also have what amount to *leit motifs*; besides the flute music, we are told is a "boys' music" rancurs sex music for the sccene of Biff's discovery and the bar room sccene where Biff and Hap pick up women ; and a special music to herald the appearances in Willy's memory of his elder brother, Ben.

The presentation of Ben is an important clue as to exacily how, and why, Miller is using expressionism in *Death of a Salesman.* Ben is distinct of less real than the other characters of the play. He is not so much a person as the embodiment to Willy's desire for escape and success. Willy calls him "success incarnate." He represents a side of Willy's own mind. That is why Ben appears exactly when Willy thinks of him, which is not true of the other characters in the memory scenes.

Miller is not using expressionistic techniques in the way they were used by the German writers of the 1920's, to dramatize abstract forces in politics or econmics or history. He is using the technique solely as a means of revealing the character of Willy Loman, the values Willy holds and, particularly, the way his mind works He combines realism and expressionism because such a combination reflects the protagonist's actual way of thinking.

Furthermore, the simultaneous presentation of past and present, dream and reality, gives the play a metaphoric quality, a poetry of the theatre.

Q. 132. Discuss critically the significance of the recurring motif of "Personal Attractiveness" in Death of a Salesman.

Or

Why does Willy Loman put so much of premium on being "ell-lied"?

Or

"The most dominant idea running through the play is that a person most be not just liked but well-liked." Discuss.

Ans By motif is broadly and roughly meant recurring ideas or thoughts which act as a unifying idea. Sometimes this motif is realized through a commentary on characterization or on the ideas in the work. The dominant motif in *Death of a Salesman* is that a person must be well-liked, To Willy, this is the only purpose of man's life. For him a well-liked person is a demi-god. If a person is well-liked, then the entire world opens up for him. Willy took this idea from an old salesman named David Singleman who was so loved and respected that all he had to do was to go into a town and pick up a phone and people placed plentiful orders with him. And when David Singleman died at the age of eightyfour, buyers and salesmen from all over the country came to his funeral. That was a time when selling depended on the personality of the salesman and not on the quality of the product to be sold.

That is why in the beginning Willy wants his son Biff to be a very well-liked person to possess personal attrativeness which is essential for a successful career. Later on Happy tells Biff that he could brrow any amount of money from Bill Oliver because Biff is "so well-liked." Thus Happy also happens to believe in Willy's philosophy of being well-liked.

Even in the flashbacks this is highlighted. In the first flashback we see that Willy has always believed in this idea and has instilled it in his boys. When Biff seals the football from the locker room so as to practice with it, Willy tells him not to mind the affair because the coach won't mind the theft because the coach

"like you." Being well liked, Willy believes, could be an excuse of all mistakes a man commits. Charley, according to Willy, is not well-liked, although he is liked, and that he himself can create a bigger business out of his being well-liked.

The cencpet of being well-liked becomes dominant in Biff too. He characterrizes Bernard as liked but not well-liked. Willy conforms rather encourages Biff's approach by explaining to him that good marks in school don't mean too much, but "the man who creates a personal agpearance is the man who gets ahead." "Be liked and you will never want."

There are moments when Willy seems to think that people don't like him. But his wife Linda hinders him from such a self-discovery. She immediately reassures him of his being well-liked. Thus Willy's illusion becomes his theory and philosophy of life. He imagines that Biff would succeed in obtaining money from Oliver because Biff has so much personal attractiveness.

In the beginning of the second acl also we find Willy Loman explaining how well-liked he is in New England and Howard, his boss contradicts him and dismisses him from the service. Then he returns to his earlier dreams to find out that he was trapped in earlier life also. In a scene when Ben comes by to take him to Alaska, Linda reminds him of how well-liked he is and how old man Wagner almost promised him a place in the fiim. These utterances trapped Willy long ago and prevented him from accepting a promising position.

At last Willy's expectation of being well-liked remains unrealized. He has no money to pay his debt. He goes to borrow money from Charley. He tells Charley how he always thought that a man need to be impressive and well-liked to be successful. Charley then gives a final blow to his philosophy by telling him that J P. Morgan looks like a butcher in a Turkish bath. "But with his pockets on he was very well-liked." So it is not the personlity or personal attractiveness that counts but the money which a man has. Yet he is skeptical to Charley's statement, He wants some proof that his philosophy has been wrong. He is counting on Biff's being successful with Oliver. But Biff's failure convinces Willy of the failure of his philosophy. So he commits suicide Yet Willy is a man who will not accept his failure that way. He wants to change failure into success by committing suicide The poor little man ! No one comes to the funeral of this so-called well liked man.

Q 133. What is Miller's concept of tragedy ? Discuss Death of a Salesman" as a tragedy in the light of his concept.

Or

" 'Death of a Salesman' does not conform to the requirements of a serious tragedy." Discuss.

Or

" 'Death of a Salesman' while undeniably affecting is without profound, tragic significance." Discuss.

Or

To what extent does the play, 'Death of a Salesman' lacks the elements of true tragedy ?

Ans. Much ink has deen split on the issue whether or not Miller's *Death of a Salesman* is a tragedy. If by tragedy is meant only what the classical scholars like Aristotle have said, numerous plays now known as tragedies will cease to be tragedies. A great writer is never bound strictly by tradition On the contrary, great writers have left their own traditions to be followed by posterity. Miller never intended his play a tragedy on the Aristotelian model. Hence to judge it strictly on the basis of the Aristotelian requirements would not be fair. The classical tragedy deals with a hero that falls from great heights, and thus invokes the feel ng of pity leading to catharsis. Miller is essentially concerned with the littleness of modern man.

Miller himself rejects many Aristotelian concepts in his brilliant essay, "Tragedy and the Common Man." Miller's concept of tragedy can be summarised in the following manner on the basis of his essay on tragedy.

1. The Aristotelian Concept is Archaic

"In this age few tragedies are written. It has often been held that the lack is due to a paucity of heroes among us, or else that modern man has had the blood drawn out of his organs of belief by the skepticism of science, and the heroic attack on life cannot feed on a attitude of reserve and circumspection. For one reason or another, we are often held to be below tragedy—or tragedy above us. The inevitable conculusion is, of course, that the tragic mode is archic, fit only for the very highly placed, the kings or the kingly, and where this admission is not made in so many words it is most often implied "

2. The Common Man Is an Apt Subject for Tragedy

"I believe that the common man is as apt a subject for tragedy in its highest sense as kings were. On the face of it this ought to be obvious in the light of modern psychiatry, which bases its analysis upon classific formulations, such as the Oedipus 'and Orestes complexes, for instances, which were enacted by royal beings, but which apply to everyone in similar emotional situations."

3. The Exaltation of Tragic Action Is not the Monopoly of the highbred

"More simply, when the question of tragedy in art is not at issue, we never hesitate to attribut to the well-placed and the exalted the very same mental processes as the lowly. And finally, if the exaltation of tragic action were truly a property of the highbred character alone, it is inconceivable that the mass of mankind should cherish tragedy above all other forms, let alone be capable of understanding it."

4. The Source of the Tragic Feeling Is a Character's Wish to Lay Down His life to Secure Personal Dignity

"As a general rule, to which there may be exception unknown to me, I think the tragic feeling is evoked in us when we are in the presence of a character who is ready to lay down his life, if need be, to secure one thing—his sense of personal dignity. From Orestes to Hamlet, Medea to Macbeth, the underlying struggle is that of the individual attempting to gain his "rightful" position in his society."

5. "Tragedy, then, Is the Consequence of a Man's Tota. Compulsion to evaluate himself justly."

"Sometimes he is one who has been displaced from it, sometimes one who seeks to attain it for the first time, but the fateful wound from which the inevitable events spiral is the wound of indignity, and its dominant force is indignation. Tragedy, then, is the consequence of a man's total compulsion to evaluate himself justly."

6. Tragic Flaw Is a Property of the Grand as well as the Low Characters

"In the sense of having been initiated by the hero himself, the tale always reveals what has been called his "tragic flaw," a failing that is not peculiar to grand or elevated character. Nor is it necessarily a weakness. The flaw, or crack in the character, is really nothing—and need be nothing— but his inherent unwillingness to remain passive in the face of what he conceives to be a challenge to his dignity, his image of his rightful status. Only the passive, only those who accept their lot without active retaliation, are "flawless" Most of us are in this category."

7. Terror and the Fear Come from the Environment

"There are among us today, as there always have been, those who act against the scheme of things that degrades them, and in the process of action everything we have accepted out of fear or insensitivity or ignorance is shaken before us and examined, and from this total onslaught by an individual against the seemingly stable cosmos surrounding us—from this total examination

of the "unchangeable" environment comes the terror and the fear that is classically associated with tragedy."

8. The Common Man Has Demonstrated Again and again the Inner Dynamic of all Tragedy

"More important, from t..is total questioning of what has previously been unquestioned, we learn. And such a process is not beyond the common man. In revolutions around the world, these past thirty years, he has demonstrated again and again this inner dynamic of all tragedy."

9. Insistence upon the Rank of the Tragic Hero Is Really but a Clinging to the Outward Forms of Tragedy

"Insistence upon the rank of the tragic hero, or the so-called nobility of his character, is really but a clinging to the outward forms of tragedy." In the conflict the hero gains "size", that tragic stature that is spuriously attached to the high born in our min.1s. The commonest of men may take on that stature to the extent of his willingness to throw all he has into the contest—the battle to secure his rightful place in his world.

10. Tragedy Is not Necessarily a Pessimistic Play

According to Miller, "pathetic is achieved when the protagonist is, by virtue of his witlessness, his insenistivity, or the very air he gives off, incapable of grappling with a much superior force. Pathos truly is the mode for the pessimist. But tragedy requires a nicer balance between what is possible and what is impossible. And it is curious, although edifying that the play we revere, after century, are tne tragedies. In them, and in them alone, lies the belief - optimistic if you will—in the perfectibility of man."

So Miller recommeds, "It is time, I think, that we who are without kings took up this bright thread of our history and followed it to the only place it can possibly lead in our time the heart and spirit of the average man."

What Miller has written on tragedy in general may be used as a strong defence of "Salesman" to prove it a tragedy. In spite of what Miller has so eloquentlv said, critics like M. W. Steinberg who think that *Death of a Salesman* is not a deep tragedy. Steinberg writes : "while we may be prepared to accept the argument that a common man, that is, one without rank, may achieve heroic stature,the tragic nature of *Death of a Salesman* does not stem from this possibility. Willy Loman fails to gain size. He falls a victim of the society. His moments of clear self-knowledge are few, and even fewer are the moments when he asserts with strength and dignity his worthwhileness—that of the common man—as he does when he angrily rejects Biff's estimate of himself and his father ("Pop, I m a dime a dozen and so are you") with his cry "I am not a dime a dozen ; I am Willy Loman and you are Biff Loman !"

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Q. 134. Give a psychoanalytic interpretation of 'Death of a Salesman'

Or

Discuss the Freudian symbolism of 'Death of a Salesman'.

Or

Trace the psychological elements in 'Death of a Salesman'

Or

Discuss 'Death of a Salesman' as a play of dreams. Wandering Pedlar Lured From Reality.

Or

How far is the play an inside of Willy's mind ?

Ans. According to Daniel E. Schneider "a great work of art is a dream turned inside out ; a brilliant perception and portrayal of the impossible and impermissible ways in which we hurl ourselves against reality and, failing, dream out action and consequence as we sleep in our own inner universe of wishes." Miller's *Death of a Salesman* stands to the test of this definition. Willy Loman, the protagonist is a child of his dreams. He tries to keep up with the "maniac" of a refrigerator whose cost of operation eats up the very food it is designed to preserve, or like the twenty-five-year mortage on the house which is empty of its sons by the time the father has paid for it literally with his life—and life insurance. The maniacal refrigerator, the life sentencing mortgage, the ironic insurance : these things take on the aspect of sardonic gods of the mountain. These are symbols of one theme of the play—that describing a society in which man is a wandering pedlar lured from reality by the pink clouds of magic sales talk ; a world in which the burdden of parenthood is enormous and where the common man has nothing to sell but himself, his pride, his youth.

From the beginning to the end the play is full of psychological implications which may be termed 'psychological symbolism'. The salesmnn comes home carrying wearily the two battered, black sample cases which are his cross. They are like the two sons he has carried through life; they are a burden to be set down with honour, yet they prove to be his coffin. From his utterance it is clear that has lost command of them just he has lost control of his sons, control of his car, control of his mind. The axe of final catastrophe—insanity and suicide hang on him like Damocles' sword. Furthermore, Ben becomes an increasingly obsessive vision to his disintegrating mind.

Transitions of scenes and arrangement of the events in the play is suitable to its psychological nature. The first act moves from despair to false hope. The second act moves from a vestige of love to an orgy of hate, and death. A deep psychological conflict dominates this play as it dominates his *All My Sons*. In both the plays the sons are disillusioned with their fathers.

Then the inner psychological theme of the play should also be manifested. Willy Loman is not in the eyes of his sons just a man, but a god in decay. To his first son Biff, he was a god who would protect him from all misdemeanour, who could "fix" even a failure in mathematics : to his sons, Willy Loman was Salesman Lord of New England. "It is this illusion of sexless godhood that it shattered when Biff at seventeen comes to Boston on a surprise mission (to get his father to "fix" a math failure) and catches Willy with a lusty woman, then breaks down, weeps, and walks out on his father who is on his knees pleading for forgiveness, understanding and lost godhood. This is the repressed scene of infidelity and smashed authority dramatized in the restaurant.

The play is not from the Oedipal problem. A son finally recognizes that the father is not a sexless god but a sexual man, prone to every human temptation. But there is a little variation in the Oedipus theme in the play, a varition which says : he who pretends to godhood over me must fulfil his godhood or be revealed as madman. It is the murder of a father by all his sons that can be the theme of the play, which is an irrational Oedipal blood-bath given seeming rationalization by the converging social themes of the worn-out salesman. Willy Loman is really brought low in the second act Blow after blow descends upon him until, symbolically castrated, shouting madly he is forced to his knees, to ounding on the floor.

Furthermore the play is made psychologically effective by a castration-panic. He is told he is no good as a salesman and never was—by his dead boss's son to whom he was godfather, whom he named. He is told by his nephew that at seventeen something happened to Biff which destroyed the boy, a hint of Willy's infidelity. At the restaurant where the feast of celebration (totem-feast) was to have taken place, he is told by a man who Willy imagined might have started Biff on hope for rehabilitation. It is at this point that the father has to rush to bathroom—a piece of dramatic action which tells us, as explicitly as we can be told, that the father is in castration-panic ; and the panic in the father is matched by the younger son's promotion of a date with two "babes." The meaning of this episode can hardly be missed. It is the ultimate act of father-murder ; instead of the totem-feast in which the sons recognize the father's authority and sexual rights, there is no dinner. There is only abandonment. Emerging from the bathroom, re-living his own sexual infidelity, Willy Loman—ex-god—has no recourse but to shout in rage at the sexual assertion of the sons. And it is followed immediately by the mother's accusation against her sons for killing their father by their whoring This is as close to the original battle fought years ago by man and his sons as has ever been put upon the stage. It is this very thinly and yet very adroitly disguised Oedipal murder which geves the play its peculiar symbolic prehistoric power. It

is not modern man exploited ; it is also Neanderthal man raging against the restraint of civilization's dawn.

In the last scene we find the climax of the Oedipal theme when Biff goes into maniacal fury at the mother's defence of the father and exposes him as a philanderer and a fake, and is about to strike the tottering Willy. Then at the very last moment, Biff who has lived by now like his father is overtaken by pity and love and falls weeping into the stunned father's arms.

The tragedy then resolves itself powerfully upon its basis or hidden motivation which is the guilt of a younger son for his hatred of his older brother, for Willy Loman is also a younger brother. Willy reaffirms father-son relationship: "That boy is going to be magnificent !" he shouts, after saying incredulously. He loves me !" But at the same time it is just this reconiciliation between father and first son which must not be tolerated by the basic drive of the play. It is made to appear that Willy Loman can no longer endure this burden of fatherhood, this pity, this love of his first son, this evidence of authority which has failed, of fallen godhood. Hallucination of Ben is repeated again and again.

Miller follows in the play not the technique of flashback but of psychic projection, of hallucination, of the guilty expression of forbidden wishes dramatized. Willy Loman is an exhausted salesman. He does not go back to the past. The past as in hallucination, comes back to him. It comes to him not chronologically as in flashback, but dynamically with the inner logic of his erupting volcanic unconscious. In psychiatry this technique is called the return of the repressed when a mind breaks under the invasion of primitive impulses no longer capable of compromise with reality.

"To assess the extent to which the dramatisation of the repressed makes the play, strip it of its hallucinatory exposition. Then the play is a dull picture of a broken-down loud-mouthed not too bright or presentable braggart of a salesman who comes home irritable at his diminishing powers, disappointed in his sons, coddled by his wife who is full of solace but empty of excitement; a worn-out old man jealous of his relative's (next-door) success, and unable to obtain a more sedentary job better suited to his state of impending collapse. In the process of realization of his decay he quarrels with his badly brought-up sons, the older one (Biff) by now a petty thief and wanderer returned home, and the younger one (Happy) a rather dull, loud Babbitt who, very much like his father before him, has a deep sense of inferiority with respect to his older brother, and "knocks over the babes" and is "making good" as a salesman in a department store, but spends most of his money on the babes and his own apartment, a Lord Salesman in embryo. Enough to make any father, even dimly aware of his faults, think of the futility of living and contemplating the gas-pipe."

Willy's disintegration presented in the play is psychological. For example, near the end of the last act Willy comes out of the washroom of the restaurant, and is found on his knees by a waiter who cannot understand what is beautifully clear to the audience. The scene is dramatization of Willy's hallucniation of a scene in the past, in which his son Biff caught him in a hotel room with a woman. Pleading with his son to forgive him for sexual philandering, Willy hammers at the present on the anvil of the past.

The play is really an account of the inside of Willy's mind. As Miller rightly says, "I wished to create form which, in itself as a form, would literally be the process of Willy Loman's way of mind ...As I look at the play now its form seems the form of a confession, for that is how it is told, now speaking of what happened yesterday, then suddenly following some connection to a time twenty years ago, then leaping even further back and then returning to the present and even speculating about the future..." Miller's drama evaporates because psychological truth has been amended, a truth depends not only on what images we recall but in what connections and contexts we recall them.

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A Biographical & Critical Note on Some Prominent American Writers

Washington Irving (1783-1859)

A lawyer ; toured Europe ; wrote for the periodicals such as *Salmagundi & Morning Chronicle.* Main works : *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon* ; *Bracebridge Hall* (1822) ; *Tales of a Traveller* (1824); *A History of the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus*; *The Conquest of Granada* ; and *The Athambra* (1832) ; *A Tour on the Prairies* (1835) ; *Astoria* (1836) ; *Oliver Goldsmith* (1840) ; *Life of Washington* in five volumes.

A biographer ; story-writer ; sketcher ; historian and social chronicler. He also wrote witty and ironical satires ; in style classical ; he parodies of imitates Homer, Cervantes, Malory, Fielding, Sterne, and many other favourites. But he is romantic in spirit. He is much more famous as a short story writer.

2. James Fentmore Cooper (1789-1851)

A famous novelist who contributed *Precaution* (1820) ; *The Spy* (1821) ; *The Pioneers* (1823) ; *The Pilot* (1824) ; *Lionel Lincoln* (1825) ; *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826) ; *The Bravo* (1831) ; *The Heidenmauer* (1832) ; *The Headsman* (1833) ; *The Pathfinder* ; *The Deerslayer* ; *Satanstoe* ; *The Chainbearer* ; *The Redskins.*

He also wrote non-fictional things such as histories of the Americans and Europeans and other works on social criticism. He is a famous problem novelist who wrote in the vein of Walter Scott. He has written the romances of the Frontier America. His language is crude ; it is full of artificiality and formalities His work is impressive for quality as well as quantity. He wrote thirty three novels in thirty years—all types simple romances, tales of adventure, historical stories, satires, pictures of manners. His characters are people of humbler sort ; they love nature.

Edgar Allen Poe (1809-1849)

A poet and a story-writer. Whitman says that Poe's "verses belong among the electric lights of imaginative literature, brilliant and dazzling but with no heat," and that they carry "the rhyming art of excess". Tennyson considered him the greatest American genius and a great poet of the 19th century ; W. B Yeats declared Poe "always and for all lands a gread lyric poet."

(For a detailed account of Poe's work and art, please see detailed discussion on Poe inside the book.)

The American Renaissance (1829-1860)

It is also known as the Renaissance of New England because all the great writers of that time—Emerson, Thoreau, Longfellow, Holmes, Lowell, Hawthorne—were New Englanders. Only Melville among them lived outside New England. The period was marked by the broadening of religion ; nationalism and democratic feelings developed, transcendentalism also increased. They were deeply influenced by Europe. They also took interest in the Far East and India. There was a wave of new fiction and new poetry in America

The Poets of New England

Longfellow, Whittier, Holmes and Lowell were the poets of the New England. Longfellow (1807—1882) wrote both prose and poetry. But he is more famous as a poet His poems are remarkable for nationalism and love for Nature : his romanticism is coloured by a strong classicism. He wrote :

> *Lives of great men all remind us*
> *So can make our lives sublime,*
> *And, despairing, leave behind us*
> *Footprint on the sands of time.*

His poetry is further marked by homely affection, simple piety, a sensitiveness to beauty and above all a refinement of thought and manners. "Evangeline," "Hiawatha" and "The Courtship of Miles Standish" are the poems which show his treatment of love. Longfellow is simple and homely in his love ; he is not turbulent and passionate. He was a master of sonnet.

John Greenleaf Whittier (1807—1892) is a poet. His main works are : *Ballads and Other Poems* (1844) ; *Voices of Freedom* (1846), *Songs of Labor* (1850), *The Chapter of the Hermits* (1853), *The Panorama and other Poems* (1856), and *Home Ballads, Poems and Lyrics* (1860). *The Tent on the Beach, The Hills and The Pensylvania Pilgrim* (1872), etc. His poems are remarkable for their simplicity and love of nature and their folk-lore.

Oliver W. Holmes (1809- 894) was a versatile writer. More than a poet he was a scientist, novelist and biographer, a teacher and an essayist.

James Russel Lowell (1819-1891) was the most accomplished writer. He wrote *A Year of Life* (1841) and *Poems* (1844). His early poetry shows the influence of Keats. He also wrote criticism. His poems are full of patriotism and love for democracy.

The Local Colour Movement

It took place in the second half of the nineteenth century. Because of the impact of the civil war, the writers became conscious of the Frontier and portrayed in their works the local

life. It was a kind of regionalism in literature. They were influenced by Washington Irving and Scott and victor Hugo. Most prominent among the writers of the local colour movement were Bret Barte, Edward Eggleston, Joel Chandler Harris, George W. Cable. They belonged to the second half of the nineteenth century. Local colourists from New England were Sarah Orne Jewett, Mary Eleanor Wilkins Freeman, Edward Everett Hale.

Bret Harte (1836-1902)

Bret Harte was born at Albany, New York. He left school early, and in 1854 went to San Fransisco where he was involved in unsuccessful mining ventures. He began to write humorous sketches, and edited an anthology of Californian verse. In 1867 he published *The Lost Galleon and Other Tales*, and his satirical parody of other writers, *Condensed Novels*. In 1868 appeared *The Luck of Roaring Camp* and in 1869 *The Outcasts of Poker Flat*. In 1871 he moved to Boston, but this was not a success for him artistically for his subsequent work is not as good as the early stories. Finally he went to Germany as a U. S. Consul and thence to Britain, where he further wrote stories, novels and plays.

His short stories deal with miners, prostitutes and other real figures who were to be seen in California. His characters are capable of sacrifices. His stories are undoubtedly sentimental. They tend to be melodramatic. But they blend sentiment and humour.

The Minor Poets of the Later Nineteenth Century America

Behind the towery figures of Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson and Sidnev Lanier were the minor poets such as *Richard Henry Stoddard* (1825-1903) *Edward Rowland Sill* (1841-1887) and *Edmund Clarence Stedman* (1838 1908). *Thomas Bailey Aldrich* (1836-1907) and *Richard Watson Gilder* (1884-1909).

Stoddard had a high concept of poetry ; to him poetry was the revelation of ideal truth and beauty. There is in his poetry a romantic streak. Sill is also a lover of beauty. He has a flavour of transcendentalism. His poems are characteristic of sensuousness, irony and ethics. "The Fool's Prayer" is his most widely known poem. Stedman defines poetry as "rhythmical, imaginative language, expressing the invention, task, thoughts, passion and insight of the human soul." The chief qualities of his poetry are music, spontaneity, sensuousness and artistry. In his own day Stedman was regarded as a literary dictator, but he was not really a great poet.

These minor poets filled the gap between the fine poetic profusion of Whitman and Emily Dickinson and the poetic Renaissance of the early twentieth century.

Stephen Crane (1871-1900)

Mainly a novelist but also wrote a volume of poems, *The Black Rider*. He wrote short stories too. His early works are *Maggie* and *The Red Badge of Courage*, both novels. Crane's sense of rebellion against parental and religious morality, his search for adventure, his uneasy, fleeting nature all left him poised on an uncertain moral edge, evident in work and life. He is significant because he stands at an important moment of transition, moving from a Christian liberalism to a stoic humanism in the face of a frightening prolixity of experience which demanded both immersion and a degree of self-extinction. He was led into uncertainties of perception and language ; yet his parodic tone, his uncertainty of style, is in his best writing a complex artistic event. Its parodic, ironic, detached bent is the result of an obvious withdrawal from its opposite, the humanistic, liberal, personally compassionate fiction of the nineteenth century. Crane's subdued symbolism and aesthetic complexity, his concern with exposure and the growth of the awareness of pressure makes him, at best, a very striking modern writer, as Conrad and James saw. He has rightly been called "the American Chatterton".

Theodore Dreiser (1874-1945)

The name of Theodore Dreiser along with those of Howells, Stephen Crane and Hamlin Garland is associated with the realistic movement in American fiction. It is Dresier who is recognized as the chief American naturalistic writer. He wrote a number of short stories and eight novels. His most famous works are *An American Tragedy* (1925), *Sister Carrie*, *The Financier*, *Jennie Gerhardt* (1912), *The Titon* (1915) and *The Stoic* (1947). He also wrote two autobiographies.

It is sometimes said that Dreiser merely relied on slice-of-life technique and that he made use of massive documentation for creating the illusion of reality. He combines objective views with impressions registered through the sensory mechanism of his characters. .

The purpose of the naturalistic novels of Dreiser was to indict the prevalent American attitude that defined success solely in material terms. He attacked also conventionality and complacency. He glamed American materialism as much as he blamed its false values for the catastrophes of *An American Tragedy* and *The Bulwark*. His main faults are sentimentality and verbosity.

O'Henry (1862-1910)

O'Henry is the most widely read story-writer of his day. His real name was William Sydney Porter. He was born in North Carolina. Some of the famous collections of his stort stories are : *Cabbages and Kings* (1904), *The Four Million* (1906), "The Gift of

Magi" (in Full House, 1952). O'Henry was an entertainer par excellence. His other well known short stories are "The Frunished Room", "The Last Leaf" and "The Third Ingredient."

O'Henry's stories are full of abundant humour, irony and satire. His humour is always catching, though it is often based on an arbitrary juxtaposition of incrongruities. His style is characterized by the use of colloquialism and slang. He is also fond of using far-fetched metaphors and circumlocution.

William Faulkner (1897-1962)

Faulkner wrote poems and novels. He is famous as a novelist. His major novels are *Sartoris* (1929), *Mosquitoes* (1927), *Soldier's Pay* (1926). *The Sound and Fury* (1929), *Sanctuary*; *As I Lay Dying* (1930), *Light in August*; *Absalom, Absalom*; *Pylon*; *The Unvanquished* and *The Wild Palms* (all these last three were published between 1935 and 1939). Faulkner also wrote some short stories.

Faulkner is a difficult and obscure novelist. Readers have to read him attentively. Fualkner has experimented boldly with the technique of narrating the story. He has displayed considerable originality in this. He has also written in the stream-of-consciousness technique, and *Sound and the Fury* is a novel in the stream-of-consciousness. His style is flavoured with rich rhetoric; he has an astonishing lucidity. But more often his style is ornate, A critic says, "Faulkner's prose has an archaic sound, like a hunter's horn." He blends realism and symbolism. He uses bold idioms and strange techniques. He combines the novel of direct action with the novel of analysis. His themes are serious.

Francis Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940)

A poet and a novelist; his major novels are *This Side of Paradise* (1920), *The Beautiful and Damned, The Great Gatsby, Tender is the Night*. When Fitzgerald died, a newspaper commented: "The Lost generation loses its prophet." He was the epitome of that restlessness and sense of tragedy which many American writers felt after the World War. There is is a note of moralizing in his novels. His novels reveal a deep perception. He has recaptured in his novels the poignant feeling of youth searching wildly for a perfection that does not exist.

Tennessee Thomas Lanier) Williams (1911—)

A famous contemporary American dramatist. Major plays include: *Battle of Angels* (1940), *The Glass Managerie* (1945), *A Street Car named Desire* (1947), *Orpheus Descending* (1957), *Cat on a Hot Tin Rroof* (1955). He has been awarded pultizer prize. Many of his plays have been made into films and he also wrote the original screenplay for *Baby Doll*. He has also written

poetry, short stories and a novel, *The Rcmon Spring of Mrs. Stone* (1950).

'Williams' favourite' characters turn aside from a world in which they are ill at easel and out of place. After the pattern of Blanche Dubois in *A Street Car Named Desire* they tend to be rootless wanderers, for ever denied the security of a home and compelled by their sensitivity to take refuge in a world of their imagination. Williams' plays tend to focus on scme traumatic, even horrifying, episode in which a brutal world abruptly shatters the fragile identity which they have built up—a moment which, as in *The Glass Menagerie* and *The Rose Tattoo*, is often treated in a spirit of grotesque comedy. Comedy, in fact. is crucial to Williams' vision, for it gives it greater reality and conviction. and when it disappears, his work is always in danger of becoming unbalanced. At one place he says, "we are all savages at heart but observing a few amenities of civilized behaviour." The fear of death and decay already present in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* became a central pre-occupation in *Sweet Bird of Youth* and *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore*. In these plays, however, there was a straining after effect, a portentous solemnity, a reliance on vague and unconvincing symbolism that was a disappointment after the careful characterization, psychological insight, delicacy of feeling and sense of theatre that marked his earlier work."

Tennessee Williams' plays are plays about life. He was fascinated by truth. His plays contain elements of realism and anti-realism. He is a realistic observer of life. The characters have both real and mythical idenifications. As mentioned by John Gassner, 'In *Street Car* poetic drama becomes psychological reality." He also makes use of symbols. "He is Broadway's most dedicated avant gardist."

Ezra Pound (1885-1972)

A lecturer, critic and poet; born at Pennsylvania (U. S. A.), he went to Paris and helped a number of artists such as Moyce, Eliot, Antheil, Tagore, Gaudier-Brzeska; during the Second World War he made a number of broadcasts from Italy, was arrested in 1945 and tried for treason. He was released in 1958.

He defined poetry as melopoeia (melody-making), phonopoeia (image-making) and logopoeia (word-or thought-mak ng). He was a powerful, vigorous imagist poet who learned a great deal from the Japanese *haiku*, which combines thought and picture in highly concentrated form.

His main poetical works are *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* (1920) and *The Cantos*.

Saul Bellow (1915—)

A novelist who wrote novels entitled *Dangling Man* (1944),

The Victim (1947), and *Seize the Day* (1956), *Henderson the Rain King* (1959). He has also written a large number of short stories. He also writes of racial and religious prejudices.

Tom Wolfe (1931 -)

Tome Wolfe (1931—) was born in Richmond. He chronicled American pop culture, often in the language of advertisements and comic strips. He is fascinated by those status groups created as alternatives to conventional society. He is a prose writer and has written a large body of articles to various periodicals and many of his articles exist in the collected volumes under different names.

Sherwood Anderson (1876-1941)

His best known work is Winesburg, Ohio (1919), a collection of stories dealing with the restricted eccentric life of a small Midwest community. Anderson describes his characters as "grotesque". He is superficially folky.

P. G. (Pelham Grenville) Woodhouse (1881-1975)

P. G. Woodhouse is famous as a short-story writer and novelist. His famous novels are *Leave it to Psmith, Ukridge, Carry On, Jeeves! Rhight Ho, Jeeves, The Code of the Woosters, Ring for Jeeves* and *The Return of Jeeves*. He uses aritificiality as a fountainhead of the comic. He is a perfect technician.

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